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# "THERE IS SO MUCH YOU CAN LEARN": CHILD CARE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

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**by**

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## Dedication

To my son, who does not remember a mom not in college;

To my husband, who barely remembers a wife not in college;

And to my mother, who always told me I had to go to college,

But was not as clear about when I should stop.

.

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# “THERE IS SO MUCH YOU CAN LEARN”: CHILD CARE TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

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The purpose of this study was to explore the professional development of child care teachers through their descriptions and perceptions of their training experiences. Influenced by frameworks on professional thought and beliefs (Clark, 1988), the following questions guided this study: How do child care teachers working in for-profit centers describe their professional development experiences? Specifically, what sources, contents, formats and amounts do they describe? What perceived relationship of professional development to their classroom practice do they describe? How do they describe the relationship of professional development to issues in the field such as quality and teacher turnover? And what insights can they provide in regards to pre-service and in-service professional development?

The sample included 18 child care teachers working in 6 for-profit centers. Data were collected through interviews, and analyzed using qualitative research techniques including comparative analysis.

The findings are described in four thematic sections: “Sink or Swim”: (Entry Training Experiences); “Very Good, For the most Part”: (Inservice Training Classes); “It Can Only Make Things Better”: (Importance of Training); and “Everything Under the Sun”: (Professional Development Needs). The teachers’ provided rich descriptions about their experiences both in training classes and within their centers. For many of these teachers, a lack of preservice and minimal inservice training opportunities led to reliance on their own abilities and learning from others in their environment. Training classes were seen as positive experiences overall, however many teachers reported instances of impractical content and disengaging formats. While the majority of these teachers thought that “training is important”, their descriptions revealed a limited influence on practice. Further, while many teachers saw relationships between training and important issues in the field like program quality, these described relationships were tempered by their perceptions of the role that personal characteristics play in how teachers relate to training. In addition, the teachers provided their own ideas about how to meet the professional development needs of child care teachers.

The findings of this study have many implications for the field in terms of designing and structuring professional development opportunities for child care teachers to better meet their needs within their particular contexts.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

My interest in the professional development of child care teachers stems from my own experiences in the field; first as a child care teacher, then a child care center director, and later as a child care teacher educator. Throughout my career, training has always played a key role. As a teacher coming into the field without prior training or education, I was always searching for training opportunities and spent countless hours in workshops. Then as a director, my search continued as I tried to find or provide training opportunities for the teachers in my center while juggling the multitude of responsibilities that comes with being an administrator in a child care facility. More recently, in my role as a child care teacher educator, my focus has moved from searching for training to looking at how to provide effective and meaningful training experiences for child care teachers. From my personal and professional experiences working with teachers, I have found the feedback and insights that teachers themselves can provide about their own learning experiences to be invaluable to my understanding of how to provide support and educational opportunities for child care teachers.

Child care teachers have a job that entails a great deal of responsibility. Not only are they responsible for the safety and well-being of the children in their care, they are also called upon to organize "activities that stimulate children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth" and are seen as having "a vital role in preparing children to build the skills they will need in school" (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). Increasing recognition of the "crucial importance" of early experiences on children's development

(Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p.6) has highlighted the need for teachers of young children to be knowledgeable about teaching practices that are most likely to enhance and promote children's development. Professional organizations, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), assert that early childhood teachers need both educational preparation and on-going professional development opportunities in order to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for providing high quality care and education for children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Yet, most child care teachers come into the field with little or no preparation.

The United States does not have a national system for the regulation of child care centers which leaves each state to set its own standards for the hiring qualifications of child care teachers as well as requirements for on-going training. Currently, the majority of states (76%) do not require child care teachers to have pre-service training or education relating to early childhood education or child development before entering the field (NARA, NCCIC, 2006), but most states do mandate that child care teachers participate in on-going training experiences each year. There is substantial variation in these requirements, however, with the majority of states requiring less than 12 annual clock hours of training per year and only 9 states requiring 20 or more clock hours of on-going training per year (NCCIC, NARA, 2006). The state of Texas rates relatively high in comparison with other states in that child care teachers are required to complete 8 clock hours of pre-service training if they enter the field without previous experience or training and then must complete 15 clock hours of inservice training annually (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006).

These annual clock hours of training may come from formal sources such as classes conducted at community colleges or universities, but typically this training takes the form of informal community workshops, conferences or seminars (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002). In Texas, the state regulations list the following as possible sources of training for teachers working in child care centers: seminars, workshops, conferences, early childhood classes, self-instructional programs, or planned learning opportunities provided by consultants, qualified directors, caregivers that meet minimum standards qualifications or child-care associations, local school districts, colleges or universities or Licensing (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006).

While most states require on-going training in the form of clock hours for child care teachers (NCCIC, NARA, 2006), researchers have not paid much attention to this mode of professional development. As a result, little is known about the large and growing population of child care teachers or their training and education. The lack of research on the experiences and perceptions of child care teachers is a significant gap in the early childhood literature. Further research into the ways that child care teachers, particularly those in for-profit centers, describe and think about their training experiences needs to be added to the dialogue in the field in order to determine how best to meet their professional development needs.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore the professional development of child care teachers working in for-profit child care centers through their descriptions of their training experiences and their perceptions of those experiences in relation to their practice

and to their understandings of the role training plays in the field. This study seeks to discover what child care teachers can tell us about their actual training experiences, their understandings of how those experiences have influenced their practice, their views about the role of training in the field, and their perspectives about the training needs of child care teachers. With this purpose in mind, this study has several aims. First, this study seeks to develop an understanding of the teachers' participation in training in terms of the amount of training classes they have participated in, the sources of these classes, the content or topics covered and the format or mode of instruction. This includes their perceptions about these experiences in training classes in terms of what formats or modes of instruction they have found beneficial to their own learning. A second aim of this study is to explore how the teachers describe the connections between what they have learned in their classes to the work they do with young children or how they think that their training experiences have influenced their practice. A third aim is to examine the teachers' general perceptions about the role of training in the field and specifically their perceptions about the relationship of training to important issues such as quality and teacher retention. A fourth aim of this study is to provide the participants with the opportunity to express their ideas about the pre-service and inservice training needs of child care teachers based on their perceptions of their experiences in the field. Finally, I am choosing to explore the experiences of child care teachers working solely in for-profit centers as the numbers of this type of center are steadily increasing and past research has suggested that differences in auspice may play an important role in our understanding of the current child care context (Morris & Helburn, 2000). As this study is concerned with understanding the teachers' descriptions of their training experiences and their

perceptions of those experiences, data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews with teachers working in child care centers, and qualitative analysis techniques will be used to make sense of their responses.

## IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

In today's society, "child care is no longer an experience for a few children; it is rapidly becoming the norm" (Hofferth, 1996, p.41). Participation in early childhood programs, including full-day child care, is a becoming a significant part of the lives of many young children. As this trend continues to grow, research that explores all aspects of the experiences of children and adults in these particular contexts is needed to further our understandings and provide society (i.e. policymakers, educators and parents) with more information for decision making. In this section, I will outline several reasons why further research in this particular area is needed and can add significantly to our understanding of child care teachers working in the early childhood field.

### The Growth of Center-Based Care

Parents enroll their children in child care centers for a variety of reasons based on both their own work-related needs and the educational needs of their children. Changing workforce demographics have increased the need for child care and have contributed to the high demand for center-based care. Over the past 50 years, the number of mothers participating in the workforce has tripled (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003) making work support for parents a substantial factor in the increased enrollment of children in early childhood programs. Parents are also choosing to enroll their children in early childhood programs based on their increased awareness that these programs can provide an

educational environment that can be beneficial for their children (Hofferth, 1996) and that "children's experiences during early childhood not only influence their later functioning in school but also can have effects throughout life" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p.6)

Recent studies have found that approximately 60% of children five years of age and under receive some type of nonparental care on a regular basis (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003). While families make a variety of arrangements for their children's care (such as relatives, in-home caregivers, family child care providers, child care centers), the most popular option has become center-based care (Children's Defense Fund, 2001). Participation in this type of care varies with the age of the child, but it is estimated that while less than 10% of infants are cared for in child care centers, the numbers escalate to 40% by age three and to nearly 65% by age four (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003). In response to the demand for child care, and in particular center-based care, the United States has seen tremendous growth in the number of licensed child care centers. In just 30 years, the number of centers has risen from just over 18,000 centers with a capacity of 1.01 million children in 1976 (Roupp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979), to over 105,000 centers with a capacity of over 6 million children in the year 2005 (NARA, NCCIC, 2006). As the number of children participating in this type of care continues to rise and the large number of teachers needed to care for these children continues to grow, research exploring all aspects of child care centers and all types of child care centers has become a crucial issue in the field. The preparation and training of these teachers is central to that issue.

**The Role of For-Profit Child Care Centers**

The early childhood field in the United States is vast and complex encompassing a diverse range of programs "under educational, social welfare, and commercial auspices" with wide variation in funding and delivery (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003, p.1). Historically, the majority of programs for young children have either focused on "care" for children with working mothers (particularly in times of war) or on "education" in terms of enrichment for children from middle-class families (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003). Head Start and other federal initiatives, begun in the 1960's, focused attention on early childhood interventions for children with special needs or children considered to be at risk (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992) adding another purpose for early childhood programs.

This trend of division in the field is still seen today in the wide variation in the types of early childhood programs that serve children from birth to age 8 which includes child care centers, family child care homes, private and public preschools, kindergartens and primary-grade schools (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). As the United States does not have a national system or consistent state systems for the provision of early care and education (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003; Morgan et al., 1993), current federal and state policies related to early childhood education are "fragmented, inconsistent, and inadequately funded" (Barnett & Masses, 2003, p.137). Most federal and state funding is aimed toward assisting low-income families with child care or providing services for children with special needs (Adams & Rohacek, 2002; Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003). Children and families must meet qualification guidelines to participate in these programs and they are not available to all, although there has been some movement toward offering universal prekindergarten for all four year olds (Ackerman, 2005, 2004b). For the

majority of programs, the bulk of their funding comes from fees paid by parents (Barnett & Masse, 2003) and many parents must rely on for-profit centers to fulfill their child care needs when they do not qualify for public services. However, we know relatively little about for-profit centers or their teachers.

The term "child care center" typically refers to full-day programs that serve children from infancy through preschool and may also include before and after-school care (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003) although many half-day or part-year programs (such as Head Start or public preschool programs) are often referred to as child care centers. It is common to divide early childhood programs into two broad categories, nonprofit and for-profit, with approximately 40% of child care programs being classified as for-profit and the other 60% as nonprofit (Morris & Helburn, 2000). For-profit centers may be independently operated or part of a local or national chain. Categories of nonprofit centers include independent, Head Start, parent cooperative, church sponsored, university sponsored, public or private school sponsored, government agency sponsored and community organization sponsored (Phillips, Howes, & Whitebook, 1992). For-profit centers currently outnumber other types of centers (Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002).

Both nonprofit and for-profit centers provide valuable services for families in terms of educational experiences for children and work support for parents. Although most of the research in early childhood settings has not focused on differences between program types, researchers are pointing to the need for the field to have better understandings about the possible variations between auspices (Morris & Helburn, 2000). Several studies have indicated for-profit centers exhibit lower levels of quality (Helburn, 1995; Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997) and have teachers with lower levels

of education (Helburn, 1995) Further research in early childhood settings that focuses on auspice is needed to gain a fuller understanding of these particular contexts. In particular, research into the training and education of teachers within different auspices would give the field greater insight about their professional development needs.

**Qualifications of Child Care Teachers**

Most teachers working in public school classrooms are required to meet teacher certification requirements in which, while varying from state to state, a "general agreement exists" requiring the minimum of a baccalaureate degree (Saracho & Spodek, 1993, p.5). However, as previously mentioned, state regulations for child care centers typically do not require this type of pre-service education (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006). In Texas, the minimum requirements for working in a child care center are that the applicant is eighteen years old or older, has a high school diploma or its equivalency and can pass a criminal history background check (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006).

Wide variation exists in the educational levels of child care teachers. According to Morgan (2003), "A few have master's degrees. More have bachelor's degrees. Still more have associate's degrees or the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. A large number have no degrees." While reports of educational levels of teachers vary between studies, it is estimated that 49% of teachers working in early childhood programs with children who are 3 to 4 years of age have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in general education or early childhood education, however, the numbers go down to 38% when looking strictly at teachers in for-profit centers (Saluja et al., 2002). Studies have

also indicated that teachers of children younger than 3 years of age typically have lower levels of formal education related to early childhood education and are less likely to have degrees (Helburn, 1995). After extensive searching, I could not find data on the educational levels of teachers working in Texas child care centers. As state regulations in Texas do not require child care teachers to have a degree, it seems unlikely that the numbers would be greater than those found in other studies.

For child care teachers that do not have degrees, an alternative mode to teacher training and education is the CDA (Barbour, Peters, & Baptiste, 1995). Despite its name, it is not an associate of arts degree, but a credential with specific requirements that include 120 clock hours of training, 480 hours of experience working with young children, and successful assessment by an advisor (Council for Profession Recognitiion, 2007). While the CDA program originated as a response to training needs in Head Start programs, today it has branched out to all areas of the field (Barbour, Peters, & Baptiste, 1995) and is frequently mentioned in state licensing requirements. For example, the state standards in Texas list completion of a CDA as one avenue for being qualified to be a child care center director (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2006).

As most child care teachers enter the field without preparation and the majority of these teachers do not hold degrees in early childhood or a related field, the pre-service and inservice training they receive in the field as a result of state requirements becomes even more important. For many of these teachers, the training they participate in as a result of state requirements may be the only guidance and support they receive. Research that explores all aspects of these training field-based training experiences is needed to

provide the field more information about how this training is meeting their professional development needs.

**Connections between Training and Quality**

As the number of children participating in child care has increased over the past several decades, so has the amount and depth of research into issues of quality in child care. Over the past 30 years, many research studies have found significant correlations between the quality of care provided to children and the teachers' levels of training and education (e.g. Helburn, 1995; NICHD, 2000; Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1989) as well as associations between the quality of care provided and positive developmental outcomes for children (e.g. Burchinal et al., 2000; NICHD, 2000; NICHD, 1999; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989). While this research has indicated that the training and education of teachers is related to quality, questions remain about the type of education and specific levels. Some of the studies have indicated that specialized training leads to higher levels of quality (e.g. Helburn, 1995; Roupp et al., 1979) while others point to higher levels of education in any field as a correlate of higher quality scores (e.g. Whitebook et al. 1989). Most of these studies focus on the teachers' highest levels of education achieved by measuring reported levels in the form of a scale. For example, one major study categorized the teachers' highest level of education on a five point scale ranging from no specialized training to a bachelor's degree with college-level training coursework in early childhood education (Whitebook et al., 1989). In these studies, researchers use quantitative analysis methods to identify statistical relationships between these levels of training/education and measurements of classroom quality as determined

using environment rating scales. In focusing on the highest levels of education achieved, these studies often do not address the wide variation in professional development that is seen in child care teachers and typically obscures the training clock hours that child care teachers participate in as a result of state requirements.

Researchers of quality have also looked at the effectiveness of specific training programs in terms their ability to produce changes in teacher behavior that effect measured levels of quality. Several studies have found that training can be effective and produce higher quality caregiving (e.g. Arnett, 1989; Cassidy, Buell, Pugh-Hoese, & Russell, 1995; Davis, Thornburg, & Ispa, 1996; Rhodes & Hennessy, 2000) and even small amounts of training have been found to make a significant difference in teacher behaviors (e.g. Hearns, 1998; Kaplan & Conn, 1984; Rhodes & Hennessy, 2000). Research inquiries of this type add to our understanding of the role and value of training in the field, but do not provide insight into teachers' perceptions of their experiences as they participate in training.

While the majority of research findings from studies of quality in early childhood settings clearly indicate a relationship between higher levels of quality and teachers' training and education, and many provide evidence that training efforts can be effective, the findings do not provide much information about the training teachers' participate in as a result of state regulations nor do they provide detailed information about the training of teachers between auspices. Given the large numbers of child care teachers required to participate in training as a result of state regulations, it seems relevant to look at the training they receive.

**State Regulation of Training for Child Care Teachers**

The training and education of child care teachers is seen as an important issue in the field and the majority of states have included training requirements in their child care center regulations (NARA, NCCIC, 2006). Regulation of child care centers falls under the jurisdiction of state governments with each state has establishing its own standards (NARA, NCCIC, 2006). As previously mentioned, variation in standards exists between both program types and state requirements for regulation (Morgan, 2003). For example, the majority of states regulate full-day child care centers, but 12 states exempt faith-based centers; part-day preschools are not regulated in 20 states; licensing typically does not apply to prekindergarten programs located in public schools; Head Start is licensed in 30 states unless it part of public school (Morgan, 2003). Researchers exploring state regulation of child care centers often point out that most licensing standards "represent the floor, the minimum required of an acceptable children care program" and that they often set "higher standards for child protection than for enhancement of development" (Gallagher, Rooney, & Campbell, 1999, p.313-314). In addition to requirements for teacher training, criteria regulated by licensing agencies "typically cover a wide range of subjects, such as child-staff ratios, staff qualifications, room dimensions, hand-washing and diapering practices, play equipment specifications, fire precautions, immunization schedules, liability insurance provisions, and emergency procedures" (Gromley, 1999, p.117). Studies have shown higher quality care is often associated with stricter child care licensing regulations (e.g. Helburn, 1995), but regulatory controversies, such as contradictory research in quality variables and concerns about accessibility and

affordability for families, influence how changes are made in licensing regulations (Gromley, 1999).

Each state makes its own mandates for the amount (if any) of preservice and inservice training their teachers are to receive and the topics for this training. In Texas, the state regulations lists seven content areas to be covered in the eight clock hours of preservice training and with some differentiation according to the age of the children in the teacher's care (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006). Teachers working with children under 24 months of age must have one hour of their preservice training devoted to topics specific to their age group. As for the 15 annual clock hours of inservice training required, teachers can choose from 15 different content areas although there are stipulations about the amounts that must be chosen from specific categories and about the percentage of this annual training that can be completed using a self-study format (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006).

While the state regulations provide us with information about the training requirements for child care teachers in terms of hours and topics, we do not have data on the actual training experiences of these teachers working in the field. Researchers have not explored how teachers and centers are meeting these requirements or how teachers perceive or think about their training experiences.

**STUDY FOUNDATIONS**

A rationale for studying teachers' perceptions of their professional development can be found in the growing literature focusing on teacher cognition (e.g. Clark, 1988; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1990). Kagan (1990) defined teacher cognition as "pre- or inservice

teachers' self-reflections; beliefs and knowledge about teaching, students, and content; and awareness of problem-solving strategies endemic to classroom teaching" (p.419). Attributes of cognition have gained attention as "research on teaching and learning has shifted from a unidirectional emphasis on correlates of observable teacher behavior…to a focus on teachers' thinking, beliefs, planning and decision-making processes" (Fang, 1996, p.47). The challenge, however, in making sense of this research is the variety of ways that teacher cognition is discussed, defined, and studied. Within this literature, various strands of inquiry highlight the seemingly different, but inter-related and often overlapping, attributes of teachers' thought processes including research on teacher beliefs (e.g. Fang, 1996; Pajares, 1992), teachers' constructions and use of theories (e.g. Schoonmaker & Ryan, 1996; Williams, 1996), teachers' reflections about their practice (e.g. Kagan, 1990) and the nature of teachers' knowledge (e.g. Fenstermacher, 1994; Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Although complex, this literature has promoted "the conception of teaching as a thoughtful profession" (Fang, 1996, p.47) and underscored our understanding that what teachers think is important.

For the current study, the term I am using to describe the teachers' articulated understandings of their experiences is 'perceptions.' In his review of research on teacher beliefs, Pajares (1992) points out the difficulty in using terms like 'perceptions' when trying to differentiate this construct from others such as beliefs or knowledge. In many ways, this study is trying to make sense of child care teachers' professional development through their beliefs, theories, reflections and knowledge. However, my focus is not specific attributes of their cognition, but on understanding their experiences from their point of view. Research exploring child care teachers' perspectives has focused on the

teachers' attitudes about training (e.g. Innes & Innes, 1984), their beliefs about the types and amounts of training needed (e.g. Ackerman, 2004a; Gable & Hansen, 2001), and their experiences in a vocational program (Theilheimer, 1999) but has not delved into the training in which many child care teachers are required to participate in response to state requirements.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Most child care teachers come into the field with little or no preparation which makes the training required as a result of state regulations an important part of their professional development. However, this is not an area in which researchers have focused their attention. The early childhood literature tells us that training is important for quality care (e.g. Helburn, 1995) and that training can be effective (Hearns, 1998; Rhodes & Hennessy, 2000), but it does not tell us much about how child care teachers' describe and think about their field-based training experiences. Further, the lack of data on the professional development of child care teachers working in for-profit centers, as well as their perceptions of their experiences, is a significant gap in the literature. Further understanding of child care contexts, including the training experiences of the teachers working in these contexts, is needed to provide the field with a better understanding about how to support and educate child care teachers. In particular, qualitative research studies are needed to provide deeper understandings of the teachers' perceptions of their field-based training experiences.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions will guide this study:

How do child care teachers working in for-profit centers describe their professional development experiences? Specifically-

-What sources, contents, formats and amounts do they describe?

-What perceived relationship of professional development to their classroom practice do they describe?

-How do they describe the relationship of professional development to issues in the field such as quality and teacher turnover?

-What insights can they provide in regards to pre-service and in-service professional development?

**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Within the early children literature, there is "lack of consistent terminology used to describe the field, related programs, or practitioners' roles" (Kagan, 2000). This presents challenges both in trying to make sense of the existing literature and in defining constructs for research inquiries. In this section, I briefly discuss how these terms are frequently used in the field and how they are defined for this study.

Child Care Teachers- Adults working with children in early childhood settings are given a variety of names (e.g. child care worker, child care teacher, caregiver, child care provider, preschool teacher, early childhood teachers, early childhood educator, early childhood professional, child development specialist, master teacher, assistant teacher, aide) which are sometimes used interchangeably, but may also be used to designate variances in responsibility or educational level. In the state child care regulations for Texas, adults responsible for children and counted in the child/staff ratio are identified

with the term ‘caregiver’ and must meet the hiring qualifications discussed earlier in this chapter (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006). In practice, children and families call these caregivers ‘teachers’, as do I.

For-Profit Child Care Centers- The term “child care center” refers to full-day programs that serve children from infancy through preschool and may also include before and after-school care. For-profit refers to the auspice. For-profit centers may be independently owned, part of a small chain or part of a corporate or national chain.

Professional Development- In this study, professional development will refer to all modes of instruction and learning including workshops or community-based training opportunities, formal or college-level coursework, and field-based work experiences.

Training- Distinctions between education and training are often made in the field, although researchers are not consistent in the definitions used. Most often, “education” refers to college credit coursework that can be counted toward a degree, where “training” refers to clock hours spent in workshops or other modes of training (Essa & Burnham, 2001). Along this same line, training is sometimes categorized as ‘formal’ or ‘informal’ (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002). For this study, training will be referred to as the organized classes or seminars that teachers participate in, which includes both formal and informal sources as listed in the state regulations for Texas and discussed earlier in this chapter. Specifically, preservice training includes educational experiences occurring before beginning work in the field, where inservice refers to on-going educational experiences that teachers participate in as required by state regulations.

Perceptions- In this study, perceptions refer to the teacher’s articulated thoughts and insights concerning aspects of their professional development experiences.

Quality- Definitions of quality as used by researchers in the field are reviewed in Chapter Two. In interviews with participants, quality was discussed in more colloquial terms.

Teacher Turnover- This term refers to teachers leaving their positions within their first year or another designated period of time. Turnover rates in child care centers are greater than those other educational settings (Whitebook & Bellm, 1999) and present many challenges for the field.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a review of the existing early childhood literature as it relates to the questions guiding my study. The focus of this research was to see what is known about professional development of child care teachers working in for-profit centers in terms of their experiences with training and their perceptions of those experiences. While researchers have not focused on these specific issues, there are several strands of inquiry within the literature that begin to provide us with insight into the issues associated with child care teacher training and also provide further rationale of the need for research that explores the training experiences of child care teachers. One of these strands explores the issue of quality in child care settings. Historically, the findings from these studies point to a relationship between the amount and type of training teachers receive and the quality of care they provide for children. However, more recent inquiries are showing that the relationship is far more complex than earlier studies revealed. Within this strand, there are also findings that point to differences between program auspice and underscore the need for further research on variations between program types. A second strand in the research literature that can provide us with further understanding about the training of child care teachers has focused on the effectiveness of various training programs. These studies have shown that training can make a difference in teacher behaviors, and I will review these studies focusing on what they can tell us about the content and format of the training programs found to be effective. A final

strand within the literature that I will include in this review has focused on child care teachers' perceptions related to training. Drawing from these three strands of research within the early childhood field, my purpose in this review is to highlight the ways in which this literature begins to provide us with information about child care teachers' training, but does not provide us with many answers to questions about the training experiences of child care teachers working in for-profit centers or their perceptions about their training experiences.

## RESEARCH ON CHILD CARE QUALITY

Over the past 30 years, a substantial body of research has accumulated focusing on the issue of quality in early childhood settings (e.g. Helburn, 1995; NICHD, 2000, 1999; Roupp et al., 1979; Whitebook et al., 1989). Although varying from study to study, the focus of this research has been "to determine the status of ECE program quality in the United States, to examine the relations between structural quality and process quality, and to present the implications of varying quality in terms of children's well-being" (Cryer, 1999, p.48). For the most part, findings from these studies have indicated that the training and education of early childhood teachers is one of several determinants of quality care. Specifically, higher levels of training and education have been associated with higher levels of quality in early childhood settings as measured by environmental rating scales . However, these findings have been inconsistent in terms of exactly what type and amount of training is most beneficial and the findings from more recent inquiries are highlighting the complexities of this relationship. While the purpose of this strand of research has not been to examine the professional development of child care

teachers, the findings do imply a need for further inquiry. Further, in nearly all of these studies, the training that teachers receive as a result of state requirements are obscured, as the researchers have focused more attention on the highest levels of education that teachers have received as it relate to measurements of quality. In this section, I will discuss how quality is typically defined and measured, explore the findings of several large-scale studies of quality focusing on how the researchers have analyzed and discussed teacher training and education, and conclude with a discussion of what this strand of research has added to our understanding of child care teacher training as well as the limitations of this type of research in providing us with answers to questions about the nature of their training experiences.

**Defining Quality**

The term 'quality' as used in relation to children's experience in early childhood settings is seen throughout the literature in the early childhood field to the point that it has achieved a "dominance that is hardly questioned", but rarely defined (Dalhberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, p.4). Some argue that "there can be no single, universal definition of quality in day care" because they believe it to be "a relative, values based concept that is wholly constructed and subjective" (Munton, Mooney, & Rowland, 1995, p.11). Others point out that the term may have "multiple meanings" that require "consideration of multiple perspectives" (i.e. those of staff, parents, children, cultural communities, and the larger society) (Prochner, 1996, p.5). While multiple perspectives would be helpful to our understanding of this concept, the majority of the research in this area has approached this topic from a relatively unified position of what 'quality' means. According to Cryer

(1999), this dominant definition is widely accepted in the early childhood profession. In her words:

> In the United States and even beyond, the early childhood profession has come to a significant consensus in establishing what is required for high-quality programs. The priorities in this definition of quality include safe and healthful care, developmentally appropriate stimulation, positive interactions with adults, encouragement of individual emotional growth, and promotion of positive relationships with other children (Cryer, 1999, p.52).

Regardless of how researchers choose to define (or not) the term, there are challenges in terms of the defining the constructs and analyzing data of such a complex phenomenon. Research studies focusing on quality have primarily utilized quantitative research techniques in which associations between variables are found using statistical analysis. In the following section, I will summarize and discuss the methods typically used in this strand of research.

**Methods for Studying Quality**

Determinants of quality are usually discussed as two distinct categories- structural variables and process variables (Essa & Burnham, 2001). Structural variables are those that describe child care settings, such as child/staff ratios, group sizes and teacher salaries, and, by nature, are relatively easy to measure. Teacher training and education fall into this category. These structural quality characteristics "create the framework for the processes that children actually experience" (Cryer, 1999, p. 40). Process variables, which include the quality of interactions between the teachers and children as well as the

nature of the curriculum activities, are much more difficult to measure (Essa & Burnham, 2001).

In many studies, process quality is determined using one or more environmental rating scales that involve direct observation of children and teachers in classrooms (Cryer, 1999). Several of these scales have been designed to assess the quality of classrooms in terms of the entire groups of children where others focus on the experiences of individual children. An example of a scale designed to assess classroom quality is the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ECERS) (Harms & Clifford, 1980) and its revised version, the ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998). These scales have been used in many studies to provide global assessments of classroom quality based on scores determined from observations in classrooms and interviews with staff. Using a seven-point scale ranging from 'inadequate' to 'excellent', researchers rate the following program areas- space and furnishings, personal care routines, language-reasoning, activities, interaction, program structure, parents and staff. In a similar manner, the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) (Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 1990) and its revised version, the ITERS-R (Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 1998), has frequently used to assess quality in infant/toddler programs. In addition to instruments of this nature, process quality is also assessed using scales that focus on the experiences of individual children. For example, the Observational Record of the Caregiving Environment (OCRE) (NICHD, 1996) was designed for use in infant settings and focuses on the interactions between the caregiver and a specific child. Using this instrument, observers count the frequency of specific caregiver behaviors including positive interactions and physical contact as well as providing qualitative ratings on the

caregivers' levels of responsiveness to individual children (Cryer, 1999). Other frequently used scales that focus on specifically aspects related to quality of care such as the interactions between the teachers and children are the Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS) (Arnett, 1989), which explores levels of sensitivity, harshness, detachment and permissiveness, and the Teacher Involvement Scale (TIS) (Howes & Stewart, 1987) which rates the teachers' level of involvement with children at frequent intervals (Cryer, 1999).

Methods used for data collection of structural features of programs typically include questionnaires or interviews with administrators and staff, review of documents, and observation of center attributes such as child/staff ratios or group sizes (Essa & Burnham, 2001). Data collected concerning teacher education and training is often converted into interval scales. For example, in the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study (Helburn, 1995), the researchers used reports from center directors to measure levels of caregiver training in early childhood and rated their highest level of education on an 11 point scale ranging from no training at all to graduate degrees.

In many studies of quality, a variety of assessments are used to determine children's developmental outcomes in comparison to process and structural variables. For example, in the CQCO study (Helburn, 1995), researchers conducted a variety of tests on individual children and also collected information from teacher ratings of children's behavior. In order to assess children's receptive language abilities, children were tested using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test- Revised (PPVT-R) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981). Pre-reading and pre-math skills were assessed using the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement- Revised (WJ-R) (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989; 1990).

Teachers were also asked to rate their relationship with children using the Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) (Pianta, 1992; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). These and other standardized assessments of children's abilities are often utilized in this type of research.

Increasingly, researchers are collecting additional data on factors that are seen as impacting the affects of the quality of care that children receive. The focus of these research inquiries has moved from relatively simple comparisons of the relationship between elements of quality and children's development to assessing the impact of more distal variables such as family characteristics (i.e. socioeconomic status, maternal education, parental marital status, ethnicity), child characteristics (i.e. gender, temperament), program characteristics (i.e. philosophy, auspice), community and societal characteristics (i.e. licensing standards) (Essa & Burnham, 2001). Teacher training and education are frequently associated with quality outcomes.

**Research Findings Related to Teacher Training & Education**

In this section, I will begin by reviewing three large-scale studies focusing on the issue of quality in child care settings in which the findings pointed to a relationship between the teachers' levels of education and the quality of care children receive. I have chosen these specific studies because they are seen as landmark studies and are frequently referenced in the early childhood literature as providing evidence that training and education are related to quality care. Further, they illustrate the methods and procedures of many of the studies in this strand of research. Of particular interest in this review is the ways that researchers have measured the training and education of teachers.

I will also include discussion of more recent studies whose findings contradict previous research in the field about the role of training and education of early childhood teachers.

Going back to 1979, the National Day Care Study (NDCS) (Roupp et al., 1979) investigated issues of quality and cost within center-based day care with the purpose of making regulatory recommendations for federal subsidization of child care. The staff and children of 64 child care centers in three large cities were evaluated using a variety of observation tools of caregiver and child behaviors to assess quality and a variety of standardized tests to determine child outcomes. One of the findings of this study was that higher levels of training and education were associated with higher levels of quality. In particular, higher levels of specialized child-related training were associated with better developmental effects for preschoolers while higher levels of general education were associated with higher levels of quality for infants and toddlers. In reports of this study, the researchers discuss the difficulties experienced in analyzing differences in education and training. Specialized training in this study refers to a variety of contexts including high school child development classes, vocational programs, or workshops, and does necessarily reference a high degree of formal education. Amounts of training were determined using a "summary measure" as the "training courses varied widely in intensity, duration, content, format and quality" and could not easily be defined (p.55). While the researchers in this study pointed to training and education as a determinant of quality care and made recommendations that teachers providing direct care to young children should participate in specialized training, the researchers also added that "the data were not adequate to identify a meaningful definition of the form or content of such specialized education/training" (p.161). This early study foreshadowed the challenges of

understanding the role of training in relation to the quality of care children receive and provided an early rationale for research that delves more deeply into the training of child care teachers. It also foreshadows the purpose of my study.

Ten years later, findings from the National Child Care Staffing Study (NCCSS) (Whitebook et al., 1989) also pointed to training and education as a determinant of quality care, however this study showed that higher levels of formal education were a better predictor of more sensitive and appropriate caregiving than specialized training, although specialized training did show to be an additional predictor of quality in infant classrooms. The NCCSS was a comprehensive study focusing on how child care teachers and their working conditions impacted the quality of care children receive. The sample for this study consisted of 227 child care centers from five large cities with a total of 1,309 staff members and 260 children participating. Several measurement tools and techniques were used including interviews with staff, classroom observations (utilizing ECERS, ITERS), staff sensitivity scales to monitor staff-child interactions and a variety of standardized tests to assess the children's development. In this study, the teachers' highest level of education was categorized into five levels: 1) a BA and college-level ECE coursework; 2) a BA with no specialized ECE training; 3) no BA but college-level ECE coursework; 4) no BA but specialized ECE training at the high school or vocational school level; and 5) no BA and no specialized training. The researchers in this study did not include categories for teachers with Associate's degrees, CDA's or informal training. As previously stated, one of the major findings in this study was that staff education was found to be an important determinant of quality care in that teachers with higher levels of education (regardless of field) provided more sensitive and appropriate caregiving.

A few years later, the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Study (CQCO) (Helburn, 1995) pointed toward specialized training of teachers as a better predictor of quality caregiving. The CQCO was designed to investigate relationships between the cost of providing child care, the attributes of quality, and the ways in which these factors affect children. This study was a collaborative effort by child development and economics researchers at four universities from four different states. The sample for this study was 401 licensed child care centers and included 228 infant/toddler classrooms and 521 preschool classrooms with a total of 826 children selected for development assessment. Data for the study was collected using a variety of methods including staff interviews, parent questionnaires, classroom observation tools (such as the ECERS, the ITERS, and other scales measuring teacher involvement and sensitivity), and a variety of standardized tests to assess children's development. In this study, staff training in early childhood education was measured by an interval scale in which:

> 1 designated no training, a 2 designated inservice at the center, a 3 designated workshops in the community or at professional meetings, a 4 designated courses in high or vocational school, a 5 designated Child Development Associate (CDA) training, a 6 designated courses in college, a 7 designated an AA in ECE or child development, and 8 designated an RN degree, a 9 designated a BA/BS degree, a 10 designated graduate courses, and an 11 designated a graduate degree (Helburn, Ed., 1995, p.132).

The researchers reported thirteen major findings; two of which pertain directly to staff education and training. First, higher levels of quality were associated with higher levels of staff education along with additional factors such as staff/child ratios and

teacher turnover. Second, specialized (child-related) training was found to be one of the determining factors involved in the level of quality provided. They provide no information on training experiences.

While these and other studies have pointed to the connection between the teachers' highest levels of education and the quality of care they provide to children, reanalysis of some of the data from these studies has led many researchers to conclude that this issue is more complex than originally believed (Blau, 2000; Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997). Research findings from studies that have included a "host of parent-and center-level variables" in their analysis are beginning to show that this relationship of education to quality is "sometimes evident only when simple analysis techniques are utilized, and the relationship weakens when a more complex model is used" (Early et al., 2007, p.560). Further clouding our understanding of the role of education and training for quality is the differences in how researcher measure levels of education. In a review of the effects of caregiver training and education on the quality, Hearns (1998) points out that "variations in the amount and type of training and education received as reported in these studies make it difficult to interpret their effects" as it is "often unclear exactly what type of training and education caregivers have received" (p.35). Whitebook's (2003) review of the literature on teacher qualifications and quality also discusses how current methods of determining training and education variables do not provide for clear understanding of its role in the production of quality. According to her, "linear measures of education and training" only provide us with the understanding that more training is better than less and also "confound formal education

and other child-related training" (Whitebook, 2003, p.4). These studies do not explore teachers' experiences in training.

In a recent study, researchers attempted to explore the explore the relationship of education and quality by reanalyzing data from seven major studies of early care and education across many different early childhood settings such as Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and private and public prekindergarten programs (Early et al., 2007). Their goal was to "address this problem by asking the same set of questions, using the same set of definitions and controls, across a large number of data sets" (p.560). The researchers looked at levels of education in three different ways. First, highest level of education was converted to interval scale in which 1 was a high school diploma or its equivalency, 2 was an Associate's degree, 3 was a Bachelor's degree and 4 was a graduate degree. Second they made distinctions just between those who had at least a Bachelor's degree compared to those who did not. The third category was the major of those who had a degree in terms of if that degree was in ECE or child development, another education major or any other major. Quality was assessed from scores on the ECERS (from six of the studies) and the ORCE (seventh study) and child outcomes were measuring using a variety of tests in the original data sets. As "different instrumentation in the various studies prevented specifying the variables identically across studies", each study "included whichever variable they had that was closet to the desired control" (p.567). The findings did not reveal clear associations between the teachers' level of education and classroom quality or child outcomes at any educational level.

**Differences in Auspice**

Researchers exploring issues of quality have found differences in quality levels between for-profit and nonprofit centers (Morris & Helburn, 2000; Whitebook et al. 1989). The National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook et al., 1989) found that classroom with higher quality scores were more likely in centers operated on a non-profit basis than those operated as for-profit. However, the results from the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study (Helburn, 1995) were contradictory. Initials reports did not indicate differences in quality levels across auspice, while later reanalysis of the data did show differences. Using data from the original study, Morris and Helburn (2000) found quality levels to be lower in for-profit chains and nonprofit centers operated by churches or community agencies, particularly on aspects of quality care that are more difficult to observe. Mocan's (2000) analysis using data from this study maintained that there were not significant differences in quality levels between auspices.

The number of studies that have explored quality differences between in auspice is relatively small, but findings indicate that further exploration into different centers types is necessary to further our understandings of children's experiences in a variety of program types (Morris & Helburn, 2000). Further exploration of the training and education of child care teachers in relation to auspice would also provide additional information about the experiences of teachers and children in a variety of settings.

**Section Summary**

In this section, I have reviewed studies of child care quality. This strand of research has provided information to the field about connections between teachers' training and education as it relates to measures of center quality. Many studies have

found training and education to be a determinant of quality care (e.g. Helburn, 1995; Whitebook et al., 1989), however the nature of this relationship is not fully understood, particularly in light of more recent inquiries finding no significant correlations (Early et al., 2007). Findings in this strand also indicate variations in quality between center types (e.g. Morris & Helburn, 2000; Whitebook et al., 1989). These findings highlight the need for further research exploring the relationship between teachers' training and education to the provision of quality care provided for children and the need for researchers to direct more attention to issues of auspice. The research findings in this area provide a rationale for the further exploration of the training and education of child care teachers working in for-profit centers, but have limited ability to provide us with information about the nature of their training experiences.

**RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING**

Another research strand in the early childhood literature that can provide us with further insight into the issues of training for child care teachers has focused on the effectiveness of various training programs. Many of these studies have shown that training can make a difference in teacher behaviors (e.g. Kaplan & Conn, 1984; Rhodes & Hennessey, 2000). Research of this nature continues to support that notion that training is important and can make a difference in the experiences of children participating in child care in terms of better developmental outcomes (e.g. Rhodes & Hennessey, 2000; Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2003). While the purpose of this research has not been to explore the teachers' descriptions or perceptions of their experiences in these training programs, the findings do provide us with insight about the

content and format associated with effective outcomes. In this section, I will explore the methodologies utilized in this strand of research, summarize the findings of studies focusing on teacher effectiveness with attention to content and formats of these programs, and conclude with discussion on how this strand of research provides further insight into issues of child care teacher training, but does not address questions about the nature of the teachers' experiences or perceptions about their training.

**Methods Used in Studies of Training Effectiveness**

The studies I have included in this review have looked at training effectiveness using a variety of different methods. In some studies, researchers have explored the effectiveness of a specific training program using methods in which participants (and control groups) are tested before and after participation in the training course in order to determine differences in measurement scores. In other studies, researchers have assessed teacher behaviors and child outcomes before and after completion of community college coursework. In a few studies, researchers have evaluated participants based on their level of training completed at the time of the study as compared to their . The studies summarized in this review have utilized quantitative research methods in which teachers and children are evaluated using the methods and measurement tools similar to those used in studies of child care quality.

**Findings from Studies of Training Effectiveness**

In an early study that explored the effectiveness of training (Kaplan & Conn, 1984), 17 caregivers working in 8 child care centers were observed in their classrooms before and after receiving 20 hours of professional training from a statewide training

project. The instructors of this training had a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood as well as experience in the field. While the majority of the classes were taught by the instructors, approximately one third of the classroom time was dedicated to outside speakers from the community. A variety of topics were included in the classes with more than 50% of class time devoted to five specific topics- special needs children, human growth and development, behavior management, curriculum content and nutrition. The researchers, utilizing both a caregiver behavior checklist and a center characteristics checklist, found that both the physical environment and the involvement level of the interactions between caregivers and children improved after 20 hours of participation in the classes.

Rhodes and Hennessey (2000) also found changes in caregiver interactions with children and in children's social and cognitive competence as determined by rating scales after caregiver participation in a 120-hour preschool training course. The sample for this study consisted of 16 caregivers who participated in the training course, 17 comparison caregivers who did not participate, and 68 children from the classrooms of both. Using a pre-test/post-test format, the behavior of the caregivers who participated in the training and the comparison were assessed using the Arnett (1989) Caregiver Interaction Scale and the social and cognitive competence of children from both groups' classrooms were assessed using scales that measured peer play interactions and complexity of play with objects. The curriculum for the training class covered four areas: 1) the needs of children; 2) the value of play; 3) curriculum; and 4) the development function of playgroups. The format of the course included 90 hours of classroom time and 30 hours of observation of children. The findings revealed that caregivers who participated in the

training course made significant gains in their positive interactions with children showed decreased levels of detachment while the children in their care made significant gains in complex social and cognitive play from pre to post training. The comparison groups did not show significant improvements.

In a study designed to measure the effectiveness of a language facilitation training class (Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2003), researchers found differences in both teachers' language interactions and children's language abilities after caregivers completed 20 hours of classwork. The participants, 16 caregivers working with toddlers in nonprofit child care centers, were randomly assigned to a control and experimental groups. Using a pretest/posttest format, caregivers were videotaped interacting with four children from their classrooms and transcripts were analyzed using a scale that measured the both the teachers' and the children's interactions and language frequency. The format for the inservice training program included both classroom time and individual sessions with participants. The findings indicated higher rates of language facilitation from caregivers and greater language abilities among children.

Researchers have also used the pretest/posttest methodology to determine training effectiveness of caregivers' participation in community college coursework. In a study that evaluated the effects of 12-20 credit hours of coursework on teachers' beliefs and classroom practices (Cassidy, Buell, Pugh-Hoese, & Russell, 1995), researchers found significant differences in both classroom quality levels and in teachers' beliefs concerning developmentally appropriate practices. The sample for this study consisted of 19 child care teachers who had received scholarships to attend college classes in child development and early childhood education and a control group of 15 caregivers. Using

a pretest/posttest format, the researchers found that the teachers who attended classes had higher ratings on either the ECERS or the ITERS and the "Teacher Belief Scale" after completion. While the researchers did not describe the format and content of the coursework as teachers were allowed to choose their own courses, they report that the majority did participated in early childhood education methods courses.

In an earlier study of training effectiveness in relation to community college coursework, Arnett (1989) explored the effectiveness of a four-course training program at a community college in Bermuda and found that higher levels of participation in the program resulted in higher levels of teacher effectiveness in the classroom, specifically in terms of teachers' attitudes about childrearing and their interactions with children. In this study, 59 caregivers in 22 day care centers were observed in their classrooms using a "Caregiver Interaction Scale" development by the researcher and then completed a "Parental Modernity Scale" after they had been observed. At the time of observation, the participants were at varying levels in the four-course program and were identified on a scale in which "1" meant they had not yet participated in the program; "2" indicated they had completed two of the four program courses; "3" was associated with completion of the four courses; and "4" was used to designate those who already had completed a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. While the researcher found significant differences between teachers at level 4 and those less training, he did find that teachers with half or all of the Bermuda College training were less authoritarian in their childrearing attitudes and that they were rater higher on positive interactions and lower on detachment interactions than the teachers who had received no training. However, the researcher found no significant differences in the interaction patterns of

teachers who had completed only two of the program courses compared to those who had completed all four. He attributes this to the content of the first two courses which included both communication and child development.

Researchers have also looked that the effectiveness of informal training in the form of community-based workshops and seminars in relation to classroom quality scores (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002). Using data from the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes study (Helburn, 1995), these researchers examined the teachers' highest levels of education in relation to quality scores and also whether or not they had participated in informal training in the form of workshops. The findings indicated that formal education was a better predictor of quality, however, training from workshops was also related to quality scores regardless of the caregiver's background. The researcher reiterated that the evidence did not indicate that those without formal education showed similar levels of quality to those who did, but that workshop training was related to higher skills for teachers with and without formal education.

**Section Summary**

Research on training effectiveness shows that training can be effective in terms producing desired outcomes in terms of changes in teacher behaviors (e.g. Rhodes & Hennessey, 2000), higher scores on measures of quality (e.g. Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002), and higher ratings on measures of children's developmental outcomes (e.g. Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2003). Even small amounts of training have been found to make a difference (e.g. Kaplan & Conn, 1984). These findings support the emphasis on training in the field and provide rationale for continued and further study of

child care teacher training. Missing from these studies is the insight to be gained from exploration into the teachers' perspectives about effectiveness of their training classes and their descriptions of their experiences within these training classes.

## RESEARCH ON CHILD CARE TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

Many in the field believe that child care teachers and providers "are the link between program quality and children's experiences" and that "their beliefs are a critical part of designing effective educational initiatives and policies." (Gable & Hansen, 2001, p.40) However, few studies have explored the teachers' perspectives about training and their training experiences. In this final section of the literature review, I will review studies that have given teachers the opportunity to express their viewpoints about training and, in some cases, have provided the opportunity for deeper exploration of the teachers' perceptions about their experiences. I will begin by exploring the methodologies that have been utilized in studies seeking to discover teacher perspectives before summarizing the findings from some of these studies that have included teacher perspectives, and then discussing how these studies have added to our understanding of teachers' perspectives of training, but still leave much to discover.

### Methods for Exploring Child Care Teachers' Perspectives

The purposes of the studies that I have included in this review are varied and, while seeking to understand some aspect of teachers' perspectives, most do not have teacher perspectives about their training experiences as their primary objective. Most of these studies use qualitative research methods in which data is collected through interviews, focus groups or observation. One of the studies uses a quantitative research

methodology utilizing a scale to rate responses to a telephone survey (Gable & Halliburton, 2003).

**Findings Related to Child Care Teachers' Perspectives**

Innes & Innes (1984) conducted a qualitative study that looked at caregivers' general attitudes about child care. The sample for their study was 31 child care teachers and directors working in child care centers (17), group day care homes (6) and family day homes (8). These participants in this study were interviewed using a focused interview technique in order to explore how they constructed their identities as caregivers and how they felt about parents and their professional roles. The researchers found that these caregivers tended to view themselves as either "mothers", "grandmothers" or "teachers". These social roles were strongly associated with the caregivers' levels of training, their professional role and their attitudes about child care. The findings indicated that "mothers" and "grandmothers" were more likely to have no formal training and be a family day home provider or group day care home director, although there tended to be no real differences between the "mothers" and "grandmothers" in terms of attitudes. "Teachers" were more likely to have pre-service or in-service training and work in a center as a teacher or director. Findings about the caregivers' attitudes about day care revealed that "mothers" seemed to think that children should be at home or in day care only if the parent must work, while "teachers" were more likely to see day care as beneficial for children. "Mothers" expressed more hostility toward parents and were more likely to see parents as neglectful while "teachers" only expressed hostility if they felt that the parents were not reinforcing learning at home. As for their attitudes toward

training, “mothers” felt that experience was the most important qualification while “teachers” felt that formal training was more important. There was also a strong correlation between the participants’ training attitude and their training history, with those with the most training placing a higher value on training, and those with less training valuing experience and personal qualities. While this study does give us some insight into how child care teachers feel about their professional roles, the profession in general, and touches on their attitudes about training, it does not give us any insight into their actual training experiences.

Theilheimer (1998) took a close look at the perspectives of the participants in an early childhood vocational program. Her sample consisted of 20 women who had dropped out of high school and were attending a vocational program. Her goal was to see how these participants described their experiences in this GED prep program that had early childhood education as a vocational focus and also to see how what they said about their experiences compared and contrasted with others such as the staff where the students were interning. Data collection included observation of participants as they attended classes and at their intern sites, interviews with the participants and staff at the intern sites, and the reviewing of documents including the student’s writings for class. Using qualitative data analysis techniques, the researcher found six themes within the data concerning the student’s experiences. The first theme discusses the students’ prior experience and the ways in which the student’s felt that opportunities to include their prior knowledge did assist them in understanding children and teaching. The second theme addressed the students’ interest in and ownership of the child care class. The third theme highlighted the high value that the students’ placed on the hands-on activities

implemented in their child care class. The fourth theme focused on disagreements in the child care class and the ways in which the students were able to express themselves. The fifth theme discusses interpersonal relationships and how those relationships were an intricate part of their experience in the class. The final theme concerns the students' plans for the future. This study is full of rich descriptions of the students' experiences and gives us deeper insight into the student's point of view about their experiences in a vocational class as they learn about teaching.

A study by Gable & Hansen (2001) looked at child care provider's perspectives about the types of training they believed were important for quality caregiving as well as their beliefs about what levels of training and education should be required. The sample for this study consisted of 70 providers which included 25 center directors, 19 center providers and 26 home providers. Data for this study was collected using focus groups. The three topic areas deemed most necessary and listed most frequently by the participants were: 1) health, safety and nutrition; 2) child development; and 3) developmentally appropriate practices and learning environments. The providers endorsed three different types of preparation: 1) education; 2) life experience; and 3) personal attributes. Of the three groups of participants, the center directors and center providers were more likely than home providers to name education as the most important type of education. Further, those providers with education relevant to child care were more likely than those with no post-high school education to endorse education as more crucial. While this study does obtain child care teachers' perspectives about training topics and types of education, it does not delve into individual teacher's experiences or their perspectives about their training experiences.

A quantitative study conducted by Gable and Halliburton (2003) explored barriers to professional development as reported by child care providers during a telephone interview. The sample for this study consisted of 647 randomly selected child care providers which included center-based directors, center-based providers, and family child care providers. The researchers' purpose in this study was to describe one state's child care workforce and explore their beliefs, concerns and current regulations operating as possible barriers to professional development. After obtaining demographic information, researchers asked participants to respond to a series of statements relating to their beliefs and possible barriers to training using a 4 point scale in which 1 indicated strong disagreement with the statement and 4 indicated strong agreement. In order to gauge participants' beliefs, two statements were analyzed: 1) "Training and education are necessary before a person starts to care for children."; 2) "Child care providers who have more training and education should receive better pay than those with less training and education." (Gable & Halliburton, 2003, p.179). Results from this study indicated differences among the three groups in demographic characteristics, perceptions of barriers to professional development, and the relationship between education and compensation; however all three groups equally agreed that pre-service training and education are necessary prior to providing child care. This study provided a very limited view of teacher perspectives.

The final study to be reviewed is Ackerman's (2004a) look at two early childhood teachers' perspectives on what level of education is necessary for early childhood teachers. Ackerman interviewed these participants about their responses to the state of New Jersey's mandatory requirement that all teachers in state-funded preschools must

have at least a minimum of a bachelor's degree. The sample for this study consisted of a teacher named Robert who is a certified, public school teacher with a master's degree plus over 30 years of experience in the field and Joan, a non-certified teacher in a private early childhood setting with an associate's degree plus 15 years of experience in the field. Their pathways into the field differed in that Robert went to college and then began teaching where Joan was employed by the center in which she had enrolled her son. She began working and then got her Associate's degree. Neither of the teachers had positive reactions to the "BA policy". Joan feels that the policy disregards teachers' experience levels and also feels she would not do well in the other subjects required to get a bachelor's degree while Robert was more concerned about how future teachers might be trained and wondered if the curriculum would be appropriate. This study highlights the variation in pathways of teachers into the field and the differences in perspective that result.

**Section Summary**

These last few studies have begun to explore child care teachers' perspectives about their training experiences, but none have focused specifically on child care teachers working in for-profit centers. The purpose of my proposed study is to gain understanding about the professional development experiences of experienced child care teachers by conducting in-depth interviews that focus not only the types and amount of training they have participated in, but also with their perceptions of those experiences in relation to their effectiveness in the classroom and to broader issues in the field.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this review of the early childhood literature, I have explored three different research strands as they relate to the questions guiding my study. While findings from studies in these strands begin to provide us with insight into this issue of training for child care teachers and provide further rationale for the value of studying the professional development of child care teachers, they do not provide answers to my specific research questions.

# Chapter Three: Methodology

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methods used in this interpretive study. I begin with a general discussion to further explain my choice for the methods utilized. I also include a list of the specific research questions that are guiding this study, profile information about the participants in the study including recruitment protocol, discussion of the techniques used to analyze the transcript data, descriptions of the methods utilized in order to establish and maintain credibility, and then provide information about my own research bias in the section on researcher reflexivity.

Historically, interpretive research utilizing qualitative methods "developed out of interest in the lives and perspectives of people in society who had little or no voice" (Erickson, 1986, p.4). On some levels, child care teachers can be thought of as those with 'no voice' in the field as their perspectives are rarely seen in the early childhood literature. As the purpose of my study is to explore the perceptions of these teachers and attempt to understand their experiences through their own words and points of view, I am approaching this study from a social constructionist perspective. By this, I refer to my understanding of the nature of knowledge in which I see it as "contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p.42). Simply put, since my desire is to explore the training experiences of child care teachers and understand their perspective, then my method should involve interaction and conversation with child care teachers about their training experiences. Interpretive

studies, such as this one, call "for a more personal, interactive mode of data collection" (Mertens, 1998, p.13) that will engage the participants in dialogue. It is through this dialogue that I may "become aware of the perceptions, feelings, and attitudes of others and interpret their meanings" (Crotty, 1998, p.75). To that end, data collection for this study consisted of interviews with child care teachers working in for-profit child care centers. The interview questions were based on the following research questions that are guiding this study.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do child care teachers working in for-profit centers describe their professional development experiences? Specifically-

-What sources, contents, formats and amounts do they describe?

-What perceived relationship of professional development to their classroom practice do they describe?

-How do they describe the relationship of professional development to issues in the field such as quality and teacher turnover?

-What insights can they provide in regards to pre-service and in-service professional development?

## STUDY PARTICIPANTS

### Recruitment & Reciprocity

In order to find participants for this study, the directors of 21 randomly-chosen for-profit child care centers in three cities were approached about finding three teachers at each of their centers who would be willing to be interviewed about their training

experiences. Initially, I dropped in unannounced to visit with directors and pass along two letters of introduction, one for the director that described my study, its purpose and requirements for participation, and another addressed to teachers that contained similar content (see Appendix for copies of letters). Included in these letters was information about free training that I would conduct as a form of reciprocity if I was able to enroll three teachers from their center as participants. This would take the form of a two-hour training workshop on a topic of the director's choice in which the entire staff could participate.

Initially, with this approach, I was only able to secure six teachers from two centers as participants. I then altered my technique and began calling centers and speaking with directors about the study before stopping in. This eventually led to six more teachers from two other centers. It was then that I decided to also offer a $10 Wal-Mart gift certificate to participants as added incentive and to hopefully make my recruitment efforts a little easier. While I waited for the university's internal review board to approve this change in my procedure, I proceeded with interviews of first participants. With the approval, and the gift certificates, I enticed six more teachers from two additional centers as participants. At this point, eight months into data collection, having enrolled 18 teachers, I decided to stop recruiting participants until I was sure (from preliminary data analysis) if more would be needed or if "saturation" had been achieved (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Ultimately, no more participants were enrolled as I made a decision to stop the sampling process when I later realized that I had very rich data and no new information seemed to be emerging from the last few transcripts (Erlander, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

In my search for participants, the directors of the centers were the gate-keepers to my access. The introductory letters were meant to make the process easier for directors; they could simply pass the letters to their staff who could then call me directly if they were interested in participating. In actuality, the directors actively recruited participants themselves. My impression from most of these directors was that the offer of free training was appealing and therefore they took steps to ensure three participants were found so that they could receive the training offered. In the majority of cases, it appeared that the directors were purposefully choosing which teachers they recruited based on either the experience level of the teacher or how articulate the director thought the teacher might be. Only at one center did the selection process appear to be haphazard. This director had forgotten that I would be arriving, but insisted that she would find three willing participants, and she did.

**Description of Participants**

The participants in this study were 18 child care teachers working in six for-profit centers in a suburban area of central Texas. All of centers are located in lower-to middle-class neighborhoods. Types of for-profit centers were purposefully chosen to include two centers that are independently owned, two centers from a small, local chain and two centers that are part of a national chain. Three teachers from each center participated. As Patton (1990) points out, "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research…" (p. 169). Since the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions

teachers working in for-profit centers, a random but purposeful sample of centers were chosen.

The participants, who were all women ranging from 19 to 70 years of age, described themselves as Caucasian (14), Hispanic (3) and Hispanic/Native American (1). Total time in child care settings ranged from 6 months to 44 years, with many of the participants having worked in several different centers over the course of their careers. Current classroom positions for these teachers included infants (3), toddlers (6), preschoolers (6) and "floaters" (3). The teachers who described themselves as "floaters" reported working with all age groups and filling in when another teacher was absent. With the exception of the infant teachers and a few of the toddler teachers, all of these teachers reported working in classrooms as the only adult. All reported having a high school diploma or its equivalency. The highest level of education in early childhood or child development varied: CDA (3), AA in child development (1), working toward the CDA (2) and working on college-level courses in early childhood (1). Several others teachers reported credentials or college-level coursework in other fields. Self-reported total amounts of training in terms of clock hours ranged from 6 to 800. All were given pseudonyms for this report. The following includes brief biographies of each of the participants based on background data gathered at the time of their first interview:

Anna (age 31), who described herself as Hispanic/Native American, was working with preschool children at the time of the study, but reported having worked with all age groups from infants to school-age over the course of her career. She had been working at her current center, which was part of a national chain of child care centers, for 1.5 years but also reported having past experience working in two different independently owned

for-profit centers and one church-based nonprofit child care center with 15 total years of experience in the field. She is the mother of three children who attend the center in which she works. After working in the field for nine years, Anna completed an Associate of Arts degree in child development. She also estimated that she had participated in over 800 clock hours of training during the course of her career.

Beth (age 40), who described herself as Caucasian, was working as a floater at the time of the study, but reported having previously worked with all age groups from infants to school-age as well as a brief experience as an assistant director. She had been working at her current center for 13 years but had worked at six other centers in the course of her 25 years in the field. This was her first experience working in a large national chain as the other centers had primarily been independent for-profit centers. She is the mother of one adult child who had been enrolled at centers where she was previously employed. She reported having participating in a high school vocational class related to child care and also having earned a bachelor's degree in psychology early in her career. She also estimated that she had participated in more than 800 clock hours of training since her initial entry into the field.

Cara (age 40), who described herself as Hispanic, was working as a teacher of two year olds in center that was part of a large national chain at the time of her first interview. She reported that she had worked at her current position for about nine months and that she had briefly worked at this same center in the past. These were her only experiences in the field. She is the mother of seven children who have not attended the center. Before coming to work in child care, Cara said that she took some classes that would help her get a job in medical records. She estimated that she had participated in approximately

20 clock hours of training between her previous and current experiences working at her center.

Doreen (age 39), who described herself as Caucasian, was working with preschoolers at an independent for-profit center. She reported that during her four years working in child care centers, she had always worked with this age group, but that she also had seven years of experience working in four different elementary schools as a teacher's aide. Previous child care employers included a church-based center and a center that was part of a small chain. She is the mother of two children who have never attended child care. In addition to having completed coursework in nursing to earn an LVN, she also reported participating in approximately 40 clock hours of training in the child care field.

Eve (age 64), who described herself as Caucasian, was working as a teacher of two year olds in an independent for-profit center. During her 44 years in the field, she had also worked with infants and preschoolers. Previous child care employers included two other independent for-profit centers. She is the mother of four adult children who all attended centers that she worked in during their childhood years. She has worked at her current center for two years. Past educational experiences include some college credits in nursing. She estimated that she had participated in over 600 clock hours of child care training during her time in the field.

Francis (age 37), who described herself Caucasian, as was working with two year olds in an independently owned for-profit center at the time of her first interview. She had been employed at this center for one year but reported having worked in the field for over 18 years. She has past experience working with two year olds and preschool age

children and reported employment at five different child care centers through the course of her career. Past education includes completed coursework to become a licensed EMT. She estimates that she has participated in over 360 clock hours of training in child care.

Gin (age 30), who described herself as Caucasian, was working with infants in an independently owned for-profit child care center at the time of her first interview. She had been working at this center for six months, but reported a total of 7 years of experience in the field working with a variety of different age groups at two other child care centers. She is the mother of one child who currently attends her center. Past educational experiences include an AA in legal assisting and over 105 training clock hours in child care.

Helen (age 70), who described herself as Caucasian, was working with infants in an independently owned for-profit center at the time of her first interview. This is her first experience working in child care. She came into this position after retiring from a long career in elder care. She is the mother of three adult children who never participated in center-based care. She reported one year of college-level secretarial coursework completed as a young adult and over 90 clock hours of child care training since being hired at her current center.

Ilene (age 19), who described herself as Caucasian, was working with two year olds in an independently owned for-profit center at the time of her first interview. She has been working at her center for 18 months. This is her first experience working in the field and she began by working with school-age children during the summer before begin moved to her current position with two year olds. She reported participating in 25 clock hours of training since she was hired.

Joyce (age 24), who describe herself as Caucasian, was working with three year olds in a for-profit center that was part of a small chain. She had been working at her current place of employment for two years but had a total of six years in the field. Past experiences included employment at another independently own for-profit center where she worked with two years olds and school-age children. She reported a minimum of 120 hours of child care training during her tenure in the field.

Kim (age 31), who described herself as Caucasian, was working at a center that was part of a small chain with toddlers at the time of her first interview. She had been working at this center for one year, but had 13 additional years of experience in the field. Past employment experiences included three other child care centers (two corporate and one church-based) and teaching experiences with all ages groups. She also reported some administrative experience at one of her past centers. She is the mother of two young children who attend the center where she works. She received her CDA certificate several years ago and reports an additional 280 clock hours of training during her employment in child care settings.

Lisa (age 27), who describes herself as Caucasian, was working as a floater in a small chain center at the time of her first interview, but had experiences working with many age groups in the past. She has been working at this center for five years but reports seven total years in the field, which includes her work at one other child care center. She is the mother of three children who attend her center. Past educational experiences include one semester of a three semester CDA preparatory program and over 75 clock hours of child care training.

Mary (age 23), who described herself as Caucasian, worked with preschoolers in a small chain center at the time of her first interview and had been working there for three years. This is her first experience in a child care setting but has worked as a substitute teacher in a public school setting. Past education experiences include some basic college credit class and only 12 clock hours of training in child care.

Nita (age 24), who described herself as Hispanic, was working with infants in a for-profit center that is part of a small chain. She had worked at this center for two years at the time of her first interview, but had a total of six years in the field. Past employment experiences included three other centers, which she described as similar to her current center in terms of how they were operated, and teaching experience with all age groups including one year as an administrative assistant. She is the mother of two children who attend her current center. Past educational experience included high school classes on child development, completion of her CDA within the past two years, and over 50 additional clock hours of training during her tenure in the field.

Olga (age 35), who described herself as Caucasian, was working in a center that was part of a small chain with preschool age children. She had only been working at this center for two months at the time of her first interview but reported 15 years in the field and employment in seven other centers in the past. Teaching experience included work with all age groups and some past administrational experiences. She is the mother of an older child who had attended centers in which she was employed in the past. Past educational experiences included participation in a high school vocational program related to child care, some college credit coursework in early childhood and current participation in coursework to obtain her CDA. She also reported past college-credit

coursework in early childhood education. In addition, she reported over 300 clock hours of child care training during her tenure in the field.

Penny (age 32), who described herself as Caucasian, was working with two year olds at a center that is part of a national chain. She had been working at this center for one year at the time of her first interview and this was her first position in the field although she did describe two years of past experiences working in a church nursery. She is the mother of one child who is currently enrolled at her center. Past educational experiences included 24 college credits in general education. She estimated that she had participated in 15 clock hours of training during her time in the field.

Quinn (age 55), who described herself as Hispanic, was working with three year at a center that is part of a national chain at the time of her first interview. She reported over 20 years of experience in the field and past experience working with children included time with preschooler and school-agers. She is the mother of three adult children who had participated in child care at their mother's place of employment in the past. Educational background includes a current CDA certificate, training as an EMT, some college credit coursework in early childhood and approximately 400 clock hours of child care training.

Randy (age 26), who described herself as Caucasian, was working as a floater at a center that is part of a national chain at the time of her first interview. This was her first experience working in the field and she has been employed at her center of six months. She is the mother of two children who are currently enrolled at her center. Past educational experiences include coursework in dental assisting and approximately six clock hours of child care teacher training.

## DATA COLLECTION

The mode of data collection used in this study was interviews, which were designed with the purpose of gathering "descriptive data in the subjects' own words" as this would provide information that would help me "develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world." (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p.94). In this section, I include details about the interview protocol and discuss how the interviews were structured to obtain data that would respond to my research questions.

### Interview Sessions

Data collection occurred over the course of one year from the spring of 2006 to the spring of 2007. Each teacher participated in an in-depth first interview (approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours) at their place of employment and typically outside of their scheduled working hours. Second follow-up interviews were shorter in duration, typically lasting no more than 30 minutes.

Meetings for interviews with teachers occurred during teachers' lunch breaks or, in some cases, directors made special arrangements for teachers to be interviewed during their working hours at naptime by having another teacher substitute in their classroom. Most of the interviews occurred in an empty classroom (available due to the practice of combining classrooms for naptime) or in the rooms designated for the care of older children before- and after-school which are often left empty during the school day. On several occasions, the director made her office available for the interview.

During the first part of the initial interview, I worked to develop rapport with the participants (Bogden & Biklen, 1998). This typically included providing a little information about myself in terms of my experiences in the field or my experience as a

mother. I began in a light-hearted manner to put them at ease as some of the participants appeared very nervous or intimidated. As we went over the consent forms, I frequently made a small joke about the criteria concerning what they should do if they are injured because of the study by asking them to please not fall off their chairs. I assured them that any information they provided would be kept confidential and explained that my overall purpose was to learn as much as I could about the training experiences of child care teachers to help inform "the powers that be" so that they could make good decisions about training. Overall, the majority of the participants seemed to relax rather quickly and were very willing to talk about their experiences in the field. With the participants' permission, all interviews were audio-taped. They were assured that these tapes would be kept in safe place and destroyed after transcription.

**Interview Structure & Questions**

The interview questions were based on a preliminary pilot study that explored child care teachers' perceptions of their inception training experiences and the specific research questions guiding this study. A semi-structured format was used to ensure comparable data across the sample (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

I began with a specific set of questions realizing that, through the process, new questions would be generated. This original set of questions included background information (work experience and education), demographic information, training history, specifics about their training classes, their perceptions about training in relation to their practice and other issues in the field, and their ideas about the training needs of child care teachers. A variety of different question types were utilized including descriptive

questions, which asked participants to describe events, structural questions, which sought to determine how the participants have organized their knowledge, and contrast questions, which asked participants to distinguish between experiences (Spradley, 1979).

In addition to audiotaping the interviews, I also took handwritten notes which allowed me to go back to previous answers for clarification and also make notes about subsequent questions. While the initial set of questions did not alter dramatically throughout the interviewing process, I was able to refine some of the questions, alter my phrasing of what turned out to be poorly-worded questions and also generate follow-up questions. (See Appendix for complete list of interview questions). I also used a variety of interviewing techniques in my attempts to gather information such as showing interest in their experiences, repeating and restating their responses, and expressing "cultural ignorance" in an appropriate manner when I wished for them to elaborate on some event or experience (Spradley, 1979).

During the interviews and at the end of each session, I frequently summarized the participant's responses to verify accuracy (Mertens, 1998; Erlander, 1993). During follow-up interviews, I also reviewed their previous responses and shared portions of their first interview transcripts in order to make clarifications and ask follow-up questions.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis began with the first interview. After each interview, I wrote summary notes about the session including any facets of the interview that could not be audio-taped such as the facial expressions, gestures, and demeanor of the participants.

Further, as I transcribed the interview sessions and worked to analyze the data, I consistently made analytic memos (Glesne, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) in terms of notes about patterns in the data, initial interpretations, and possible connections to existing literature. Multiple readings of the transcripts throughout the research process facilitated deeper understandings of the data as I searched for themes.

In addition to multiple readings of the transcripts and my research notes, I explored the data from a variety of angles. Using techniques described by Strauss & Corbin (1998), I conducted line by line analysis of the transcripts. In doing this, transcript data was broken down into discrete events and given a code to represent them. As coding proceeded, I also used the technique of comparative analysis in which similar events are given the same code (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grouping these codes in a variety of ways also led to categories. I then searched for themes among these data categories.

As some of my research questions asked for a specific type of information, for example, the question about the amount of training the teachers have participated in, I also organized my data into various charts and tables so that I could compare responses to specific questions across the sample of participants. This also allowed for a broader view of the variation in the participants' responses and further assisted with the identification of themes.

### ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY

In addition to the previously discussed member checking (Mertens, 1998; Erlander et al., 1993), in which I asked participants to review portions of transcripts for

clarity, and analytic memos (Glesne, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), a number of additional strategies for establishing credibility were incorporated into the design of this study.

One of these strategies was peer debriefing (Erlander et al., 1993; Mertens, 1998). Throughout the research process, I met regularly (often weekly) with a group of graduate students who were at varying stages in their own research projects. The sole purpose of these meetings was to provide feedback to one another about the research process and about our particular studies (Erlander et al., 1993). Additionally, I met frequently with one of the doctoral students from the group. As we progressed in our projects, we provided feedback to one another about our data, findings, analysis, and conclusions (Mertens, 1998).

Another technique to ensure credibility that was utilized in this study is "thick description" (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Mertens, 1998) of the participants responses which enables readers to make their own decisions about the data. As the method for data collection in this study was interviews, I provided many quotes from participants in the findings.

A final method used in this study to establish credibility is researcher reflexivity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This term describes the process by which researchers report on their own perspectives toward their research topic including their "personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape their inquiry" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.3).

## RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

As mentioned in the opening of Chapter One, I come to this study with many years of experience as I have worked in the child care field for over 20 years. My first position in a child care center came about through my participation in a high school vocational program. Even though this high school program included classes on child care, I still felt ill-prepared and stumbled my way through my first experiences in the field. Reflecting back, I can see that my interest in the professional development of child care teachers began as a result of my own struggles in learning how to be a teacher.

My experiences with training in the field, particularly with teachers in for-profit child care centers, have led me to believe that this is an important issue and I feel strongly that it is imperative for child care teachers to receive meaningful training opportunities to help them grow as teachers. For-profit child care centers play an important role in the lives of many children and families. Most working parents have few choices for child care when they do not qualify state or federal services and they depend on for-profit centers to fulfill their child care needs. However, there has been little focus on this particular type of early childhood setting in the early childhood literature. I chose to study the professional development experiences of child care teachers working in for-profit centers because I think that there needs to be further recognition in the field of the role that these centers play and the specific training needs of these teachers as they have a significant influence in the lives of many young children.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have outlined the methods utilized in this study including how participants were recruited, information about the participants, discussion of the

techniques used to collect and analyze the data, and descriptions of methods utilized to establish and maintain credibility throughout the research process. In the next chapter, I report the findings of this study through the themes discovered in the process of data analysis.

# Chapter Four: Findings

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the professional development of child care teachers working in for-profit child care centers through their descriptions of their training experiences and their perceptions of those experiences in relation to their practice and to their understandings of the role training plays in the field. Qualitative research methods were utilized in the design of the study and for data analysis. The data were collected through interviews with 18 child care teachers with the aim of answering the following research questions:

How do child care teachers working in for-profit centers describe their professional development experiences? Specifically-

What sources, contents, formats and amounts do they describe?

What perceived relationship of professional development to their classroom practice do they describe?

How do they describe the relationship of professional development to issues in the field such as quality and teacher turnover?

What insights can they provide in regards to pre-service and in-service professional development?

In this chapter, I present the findings of this study in four sections. I have organized these sections around themes found with the transcript data related to varying aspects of the teachers' experiences and their perceptions of those experiences. As my

purpose was to understand the teachers' perspective of their professional development experiences, I have used their words as titles for the sections and for the titles of the themes contained within each section. I also open each section with a quote from a teacher. These quotes represent the nature of the theme and provide insight into understanding the teachers' perspectives.

The first section is entitled "Sink or Swim: Child Care Teachers' Perceptions of Entry Training Experiences". In this section, I explore themes found within data about the teachers' experiences as they entered the field including the nature and small amount of the training opportunities available, and their perceptions about how their initial experiences with training supported their efforts in learning to become teachers. The second section, "Very Good, For the Most Part: Teacher's Descriptions of their Inservice Training Classes", explores themes found within the data relating to the teachers' experiences in actual training classes focusing on the topics, content, sources, funding, mode of instruction, and their perceptions of trainers. The third section in this chapter, "It Can Only Make Things Better": Teachers' Perceptions About the Importance of Training", I explore themes found within the data concerning the teachers' perceptions about the influence of training experiences on their practice, their understandings about the role of training in the field, their attitudes toward training, and their perceptions about colleagues' attitudes. In the final section of this chapter, "Everything Under the Sun": Child Care Teachers' Perceptions about their Professional Development Needs", I have included themes concerning the teachers' perceptions and ideas about the preservice and inservice training needs of child care teachers.

I conclude this chapter with a summary of the findings.

## "SINK OR SWIM": CHILD CARE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENTRY TRAINING EXPERIENCES

> *In the classroom. Mostly trial and error. For me here, it's not even necessarily a trial and error, it's a sink or swim deal. Because, for me, I've been here quite a while [3 years] and our teachers come and go, like I said earlier, so there is days where I will have two different classes, two different ages and just have somebody standing in for numbers. And so I'm going to have to take something that I had planned for my class, change it up a little bit and so it's not so much a trial and error if it is going to work, it's a this is what I have to do. Or it's going to go really bad really fast. (Mary)*

The teachers in this study arrived in the field without formal education in early childhood or child development. Most were immediately placed in classrooms as the sole teacher; others were placed with another teacher, not as an observer or trainee, but as part of the state-mandated child/teacher ratio. Since most reported no pre-service preparation for work in the classroom, these teachers were left, as Mary described, to 'sink or swim' in the truest since of the phrase. According to Howe (2006), "the 'sink or swim' metaphor is so ingrained in North American teaching culture that it would be difficult to find a teacher unfamiliar with this cliché" (p.289). Howe, however, was referring to certified teachers, not child care teachers. The teachers in this study had to figure out how to swim with this lack of pre-service training and very minimal in-services training as well.

In this first section, "Sink or Swim", I will explore the teachers' introductions in to the field in relation to their training experiences through two themes. First, "Thrown in the Classroom" includes the teachers' descriptions of coming into the child care field

and their reports of the amounts of their preservice and inservice training experiences. Then the theme "Figuring Out How to Do It", will explore the teachers' descriptions about how they have learned to perform as teachers utilizing what they define as their own intrinsic abilities ("Look at What is Inside"), learning through their experiences in the classroom ("Training Myself"), and learning from other teachers ("The Teacher Next Door").

## "THROWN IN THE CLASSROOM": HOW TEACHERS BEGIN TEACHING

> *They ended up throwing me in the classroom and just told me to go for it. That's basically what they told me. (Beth)*

Beth, like all the participants in this study, responded to a question concerning her entrance into the child care field. Among these participants, this was a common response to inquiries regarding their pre-service and initial training experiences. Almost none of these teachers felt that they had been adequately prepared as teachers of young children. In this theme, I will explore the amount of preservice and inservice training described by the teachers.

### *(Lack of) Pre-Service Training Experiences*

Beth was not the only teacher to use the term "thrown in". Both Nita and Doreen used it when talking about their first positions as teachers in child care centers. Penny and Randy used similar terminology when they described their entrance to the field as being "thrown to the wolves". Ilene says she was "just tossed in." While not all of the teachers use such dramatic language, nearly all talk of being placed as a teacher in their

first classroom with little or no training. Only two of the 18 participants said that they received pre-service training before they began working directly with children in a center.

In Chapter 3, I presented data on the educational backgrounds of the teachers in this study. None of these teachers reported completing any formal education in early childhood or child development prior to their entrance into the child care field. Three of the teachers reported obtaining a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) after working with children for several years and one reported later earning an associates degree in child development. In Texas, the Minimum Standards require that all new teachers without prior experience or training receive eight clock hours of pre-service training that incorporates the following seven topics: 1) developmental stages of children; 2) age-appropriate activities for children; 3) positive guidance and discipline of children; 4) fostering children's self-esteem; 5) supervision and safety practices in the care of children; 6) positive interaction with children; and 7) preventing the spread of communicable diseases (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006). To be exempt from this requirement, a teacher must have at least six months of prior experience in a child care center or have proof of previous training that covers the pre-service requirement. As this standard went into effect in 1995, only 11 of the participants in this study were required to have pre-service training as they entered the field as new teachers. However, none of these 11 teachers reported memories of having had pre-service training.

Many of these teachers saw center characteristics, such as staffing problems, as the primary reason they did not receive their required pre-service training. In describing her experiences at the first center she worked in, Lisa said that "they never required me to

do any kind of training at all." She believes her current employer to be more sensitive to the needs of new teachers and stated that "they try never to throw a teacher just into a classroom. Unless we had like five teachers quit, then they have to do what they have to do." Gina, however, thought that this is a regular occurrence in the field: "I think there is a lot of times where people get in a bind and need a teacher and whether you've had experience or not, a lot more so if you have any experience, here's your class." Penny described a similar situation:

> I got thrown in. They needed a teacher. And I wasn't supposed to start. I was supposed to have like a week of training and I got none because a girl had a baby sooner than was planned. And so, oh, okay. I just kind of winged it, I guess you could say. You pick up really fast.

As these teachers emphasized, teacher turnover is an important issue in child care settings. When teachers depart, the staff at the center must struggle to continue to meet the state-mandated child/teacher ratios (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). As Penny pointed out, this often means that previous plans must change to meet the needs of new situations and conditions conducive to providing appropriate training become limited. As Lisa said earlier, "they have to do what they have to do". While Ilene said that she did not receive any official pre-service training, the director and other teachers were responsive to her questions and tried to help her as they could. She explained:

> I mean, maybe, where they gave me guidance to do some things and if I had questions they were always open to talk to me about them. But, basically, I was just tossed in. So, like I said, they were real open to answer any questions I had. But it definitely was a sort of tossing into the field.

Several of these teachers described situations in which they were placed in classrooms with other teachers when they arrived as new teachers, but not for the purpose of training. Mary made a connection between this practice of being "thrown in" the classroom to the issue of high teacher turnover in the field. As she explained:

> It was more for, there's a lot of turnover in child care centers and a lot of time when you come in, depending on how you run your center, it's a do or die situation and they throw you in just for the numbers in a quote-unquote called training. But really it is just, they throw you in with that other teacher because they are over [not in compliance with state-mandated child/staff ratios]. It was more of a chaotic situation than training.

When asked if she thought the purpose of working with another teacher might also be to provide mentoring to the new staff person, she replied, "No. No. You were never told if that was really what they were doing. It was more like, here's a new teacher, here you go, Merry Christmas. Yes, it happens very often." Even so, counting an inexperienced teacher in the child/staff ratios would not meet the state standard as the requirement specifies pre-service training before being directly responsible for children (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006).

Nita was also placed in a classroom along side another teacher and did not see this as a form of training. As she said, "They just threw me in. I mean, I wasn't by myself but they just put me with the school-age kids." When asked if she thought that teacher was offering her guidance or support, she replied, "Um, she trained me terms of how the class works, but there was no actual training."

Randy did have some pre-service training before she began working at her center, but she reported only half of the eight clocks hours that the state requires and she still felt that "the director kind of just threw me in here." When asked what was covered in that class she replied:

> Um, gosh, I can't remember. They went over how we are supposed to talk to the children. What we are supposed to say. Different scenarios and different types of situations. What we are allowed to… the do's and don'ts of what to say to parents. They talked about handwashing.

Comparing her recollections to the state required content areas, it appears that her four hours of pre-service training did address four of the seven content areas (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006). Randy included training on parent communication in her recollection, but this is not a content area that is required in the pre-service training.

Kim had been working in the field since before the pre-service requirement went into effect and reported that she did not have pre-service training herself, but that she had observed new teachers at her center completing their pre-service requirements by doing a self-study manual. She said, "I think that it is a joke because it doesn't take eight hours. That's the first thing right there. It is not an eight hour training. It's in a book, you take a test. It's not eight hours."

For two of these teachers, their orientation and pre-service training happened after they were already working in their classrooms. Penny said, "I did have an orientation, but it was like three days later. So, I was already working in my classroom doing my own thing and then had to go to class." According to Nancy, her "pre-service" training

occurred well after she had become established in her classroom. When I asked her about it, she said, "Actually I started in March and I took pre-service in June." For these teachers, it seems fair to classify their reported pre-service training as in-service training.

Only two of the 18 teachers in this study reported receiving preservice training and those teachers were hired before the state standards began requiring pre-service training. Of the 11 teachers who were required to participate in preservice training, none reported receiving the complete eight hours, per the requirement. According to these teachers, center characteristics such as staffing problems and turnover issues, were the main factors preventing them from receiving their required pre-service training and contributed to their feelings that they had been "thrown in the classroom".

***Minimal Amounts of In-Service Training***

In Texas, the state standards for in-service training require that teachers in child care centers participate in 15 clock hours every year (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006). Two of the teachers in this study had not yet worked in the field for one full year, so they are still in the process of obtaining their annual clock hours. Of the remaining 16 teachers, only two said that they have not consistently received their required clock hours each year. Seven of the teachers said that they receive their 15 hours, but typically no more. Nine of the participants (half) claimed that they routinely get more than their required 15 clock hours, and all nine of these teachers have been in the field for five or more years.

In general, the teachers in this study who had greater longevity in the field reported participating in more clock hours of training than teachers with less time in the

field. While that makes intuitive sense, only the teachers with more experience reported getting more than their required 15 hours of training. In Chapter Three, I provided data on the estimated amount of training hours reported by each teacher as well as their time in the field. Only a few of these teachers knew exactly how many training hours they had accumulated (those with little time in the field), but by considering their years in the field and their estimations of how much training they received per year based on the state requirements, we arrived at an estimated figure. Still, the teachers who reported obtaining more than the required 15 clock hours of training only reported, on average, receiving approximately 20 clock hours per year. The only exception was Anna who reported an average of approximately 32 hours per year.

Overall, the teachers' descriptions of their amounts pre-service and inservice training experiences reveal two major points. First, only two of these teachers reported receiving preservice training and none of the 11 required to complete the state-mandated eight clock hours of preservice training did so. Second, half of these teachers reported receiving the minimum requirements of 15 clock hours per year of inservice, while the other half, which happens to be the most experienced teachers, reported receiving more than their the state requirements for annual clock hours. However, reports of extra training per year only amounted approximately to 5 additional clock hours. The teachers in this study described being "thrown in the classroom" as a result of their coming into the field without significant training or education in early childhood education or child development, lack of participation in pre-service training and then receiving relatively small of amounts of inservice training.

## "FIGURING OUT HOW TO DO IT": LEARNING ON THE JOB

> *And I think that is more of what it is. You get up in the morning and go, okay, I'm going to have this many kids and I have to do this. And on the way to work you are figuring out how to do it because you have no other options. (Mary)*

For many of these teachers, the lack of pre-service and minimal hours of in-service training created a situation in which they felt that they had to figure out how to "swim" on their own. While the teachers' discussions concerning their introductions into child care teaching included references to the training classes they had attended, nearly all of these teachers thought that their training classes were not their primary mode of learning how to do their jobs. In this theme, I will explore three modes for learning to be a teacher most frequently discussed by these teachers, including using their own intrinsic abilities ("Look at What is Inside"), learning from their experiences in the classroom ("Training Myself") and learning from others in their environment ("The Teacher Next Door").

### *"Look At What Is Inside"*

> *And my personal opinion is some things don't need training. Some things you just look at what is inside and you say this is what needs to happen with that. (Ilene)*

In the absence of sufficient training experiences, several of these teachers discussed their reliance on their own intrinsic abilities in helping them "figure out" how to do their jobs as teachers. A dictionary definition of the word intrinsic is "belonging to the central nature or constitution of a thing" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1997, p. 396). For some of these teachers, being a teacher involved using their "natural" inclinations and "common sense". This section explores the teachers' understandings of their intrinsic

abilities as well as the comparisons that they make between themselves and other teachers that they did not see as having these intrinsic abilities.

When talking about their work with children, several of these teachers included ideas about teaching being "natural" or using "common sense". Gina stated very succinctly that "a lot of it has just come naturally". Kim also talked about the ability to work with children as being "natural". She said:

> I think a lot of teachers coming in, some of them are going to be clueless, but a lot of them are natural. You have people that walk in off the street and have never been in child care before and they are naturals. They have a knack for it.

For Mary, part of that natural ability comes from "the way you carry yourself, your emotions and everything around the children because they pick up so much on it." She also connected this to having "common sense" and seems surprised that not everyone seems to have it. When talking about how other teachers use information from their training courses that she saw as impractical, she said:

> Some things wouldn't be practical depending on what they were talking about. You'd just have to use common sense and say, we can't do that in there. You know, you would hope that most people could use common sense that way, but apparently it hasn't always been used, because otherwise they wouldn't be training on that.

Kim was also surprised at what she saw as a lack of common sense in some of the teachers around her. She explained:

> Before I started working in a child care center, I thought everybody had common sense. Until I came here. You assume everybody has common sense and then

some of the things you see you just, it is ridiculous sometimes. You see a teacher walk outside in 40 degree weather wearing a jacket and not put jackets on children. You are wearing a jacket- it's cold. I just, I really, I had all the faith in the world that people had common sense until I worked here.

Just like Howes' (2006) discussion of the 'sink or swim' metaphor, notions of teaching as being something that is 'natural' to some seems be ingrained in North American culture. It is not uncommon to hear a teacher being referred to as "a natural" or of someone being "born to be a teacher". Dewey pointed out that often people with "little schooling" may "have at least retained their native common sense and power of judgment" (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 49). Dewey goes on to explain that these natural abilities assist us in being able to learn from our experiences. These ideas of teachers as being 'natural' or using 'common sense' seem to be closely tied to life experience, although only two of the teachers specifically mention life experiences as having a significant influence on their "figuring out" how to be a teacher. More often, these teachers discussed the role of experience in relation to how they learned from experiences in their classroom.

***"Training Myself"***

*Like I said, I've been here over a year and the growth, just personally, is just wow. How I would have handled this situation a year ago as opposed to now is… I mean, and it is just training and experience. Training myself, training with people working along side of me, watching what not to do, what to do.*

*(Ilene)*

In addition to their own intrinsic abilities, several of these teachers discussed learning from their experiences in the classroom as another mode for "figuring out how to do it". In essence, these teachers felt like they were training themselves through their everyday interactions with the children and often by using trial and error. Ilene emphasized how she felt like she was learning through her experiences in the following quote:

> Because I know when I started I used to think, oh my god, is this how it really is? Because you just don't know what to do. The longer that you are here, then yeah, you know, you get experience and then if they do that again, you know what to do. But, it's like I said, you sort of just, okay, there you go. Do what you need to do to get by. And you learn from yourself a lot more than I think from the trainings… Basically, you are just going to learn from yourself when it comes down to it… I had a pretty good idea, I just didn't have anybody there to tell me you are doing a good job or you are doing the right thing or you are going in the right direction. I learned that all by myself.

In this quote, Ilene explained how she thinks her experiences in the classroom relate to future experiences when she said "then if they do that again, you know what to do". Dewey theorized at length about the role of experience in education. For him, "all genuine education comes about through experience" (Dewey 1938/1997, p. 25). In the absence of formal education in early childhood and with only minimal training experiences, these teachers must rely on their experiences in the classroom. Like Ilene, Lisa said, "I mostly learned by my experiences here working with the children." Another

teacher, Nita, thought that learning by experience is actually the "best" mode of learning, that "just being in the classroom is the best teacher".

Many of these teachers mentioned "trial and error" as how they learned from their experiences in the classroom. Joyce said, "They didn't teach much stuff, so I kind of had to learn on my own. Trial and error." Randy said, "Actually, I think it would probably be more trial and error." For several of these teachers, it is a combination of trial and error with classroom experiences in general. When asked where she learned things that were not taught in training, Kim stated simply, "In the classroom. Life experience. Trial and error." Lisa said, "Mostly I think it has just been a learning experience actually working in with the children. And trail and error. And experience. And, you know, all those types of things is what mainly has helped me. Do you know what I'm saying?" Anna summed it all up saying, "If I didn't learn it in training, it was more like learn on your own. Like a self-learning, self-teaching."

"Trial and error" as an approach to problem-solving is frequently discussed in behaviorist theory (Ormrod, 2004). It brings with it notions of trying to fit a piece into a puzzle by turning it all directions until it fits. While this technique seems to work well for problems that have a limited number of solutions, it can be very time consuming and frustrating for those that do not (Ormrod, 2004). Trial and error also brings with it the possibility of finding solutions that work, but that might not be in the best interest of children. Dewey theorized that not "all experiences are genuinely or equally educative" (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 25) and that some are "mis-educative". He elaborated:

> Any experience is mid-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be such as to engender

> callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and of responsiveness. Then the possibilities of having richer experience in the future are restricted. Again, a given experience may increase a person's automatic skill in a particular direction and yet tend to land him in a groove or rut; the effect again is to narrow the field of further experience. (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 25-26)

Based on the teachers' descriptions of learning through experience, it is not clear how educative or mis-educative their experiences in the classroom might be. From their words and their expressions, it was clear that they felt they had been left alone to "figure out how to do it" themselves without real guidance or support.

***The Teacher Next Door***

> *When you only have 10 or 12 kids in your class, sometimes it's a lot more fun do thing with 24 when you can get the person next door to help. Sometimes that doesn't happen and sometimes it does but I do try because I do enjoy the other teachers. You know, the other help and the other view. And we can learn that sometimes from each other. We learn from each other. Really, we do.*
>
> *(Mary)*

Nearly all of the teachers in this study discussed the influence of other teachers as providing the most significant contribution in their "figuring out how to do it". In fact, several stated that other teachers have been their greatest resource in terms of learning what to do in their classrooms and thought that they had learned more from them than from any other source. As Gina put it, "I've learned more from them than probably anything ever". This idea of other teachers as a "powerful source of influence" is also

seen in research on teacher candidates in certification programs where student teachers describe their cooperating teachers as playing the most significant role in their learning how to be a teacher (Su, 1992, p.12). For these child care teachers, there was no opportunity for student teaching and they had to find their own version of a cooperating teacher. Since the vast majority of the teachers in this study worked as the only teacher in their classroom (with no assistants or aides), opportunities to work with other teachers were scarce, but many said that they make a point to watch others and ask them questions. This section explores the teachers' descriptions of how they think they learn from other teachers, particularly from specific teachers, and the specific ways that they access the knowledge of other teachers through watching and asking questions.

**Learning from Other Teachers**

Many of the teachers spoke at length about specific teachers they have learned from, while others spoke in more general terms about learning from others. Francis said, "I think that we all benefit from each other because like somebody had an idea and you're like, oh, that's a good idea and that's how you learn." When talking about teachers that they think they learn from, two factors seemed to influence their choice: proximity and the experience/educational level of the teacher.

Since the majority of these teachers worked in classrooms by themselves, the teacher in the room next door became an important resource assuming that teacher was someone they felt they could learn from. Randy said that she was very fortunate to have an experienced teacher nearby: "One of the other teachers has helped me out a lot. Her class is up at the front, so it's kind of easy to talk to your closet person."

While proximity was the criteria for some of the teachers, others spoke of purposefully seeking out teachers that were more experienced or "that had been had been there for a while", as Eve said. Some of the teachers, like Joyce, described specific teachers that they felt had an influence on their learning about their work in the classroom. She explained:

> I had a teacher. Her name was _____ and she had been doing this forever. She's no longer with us. She passed away. She taught me a lot. And she was a fellow teacher. And she had been doing it for so long, I mean, she was just great with the kids. And the kids all loved her. I learned a lot from her.

While experience seemed to be an important factor in determining which teachers might be the ones to learn from, some of the teachers also mentioned the educational level of the teacher, for example, if the teacher had obtained a CDA. Francis described such a teacher:

> I learned a lot from another teacher that we have here. She's been here almost 10 years. Yeah, she knows what she is doing. She's got her CDA. You know, just the way she talks to the kids. I'll pick up on that. And I've worked with her for six years and I've learned a lot from her. A lot of good ideas from her because she's been doing it for so long.

The teachers in this study thought that their primary mode of learning how to be a teacher was through interactions with other teachers at their centers. This is not so different from the experiences of newly certified teachers in school settings. In a study of the experiences of a beginning teacher, Craig (1995) found that her participant's knowledge about teaching was "influenced by his experiences in his professional

knowledge context" (p. 151). Craig identified the "people with whom the teacher constructed and reconstructed meaning for his teaching experience" as one of his "knowledge communities". The particular mode of interaction in his case was "narratives of experience" or stories about practice. In much the same way, these teachers are learning from their specific knowledge communities (other child care teachers) within their specific professional knowledge context (their child care center). It is through these knowledge communities that the teachers develop their knowledge about teaching by interacting with colleagues. Other researchers looking at the ways in which teachers learn in their particular learning environments have found that teacher candidates in certification programs illicit the practical knowledge of their mentor teachers through observing a mentor's lesson, asking specific questions and having discussions with these teachers about practice (Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2003). The teachers in this study also describe learning how to be a teacher by watching other teachers and asking them questions. For these teachers, this is not a formal mentoring arrangement like that where a cooperating teacher mentors a student teacher; rather, these teachers are finding their own models and mentors.

**Watching Other Teachers**

One of the ways in which these teachers felt that they learned from other teachers in their professional knowledge context was by watching them. Different from formal observations, these were the day-to-day happenings at the centers they witnessed or purposefully sought out. Kim gave an example of this when she talked about having difficulties with challenging behavior in her classroom and going to watch how a more experienced teacher resolved the problem. She explained, "I would watch how she

would handle it and then I would learn how to handle it in that same manner." Gina also talked about purposefully watching another teacher in order to learn from her. She explained:

> There are a couple of teachers here that I learned from that are so awesome that, literally, I don't know how they do it. To me, I almost think that is better than anything. Like there is a class across the hall, she's been an assistant director and she is just, it's the most awesome class. And anytime I can get five minutes away from my room to go stand at the door and see what they are doing, I do it. She's got the kid's entertained, she's talking to them on their level, but yet like they are an adult. She's, I learn stuff from her all the time… I feel like a use them a lot, other teachers, I really do.

Joyce also reported watching other teachers when she gets the opportunity. When asked about who her best teachers in the field have been, she replied:

> Other teachers. Watching what they've done. And to try to add my own little thing to it. Probably watching them. Like if I'm on break or something, they'll come down with their class. Just to see how they get them to sit down at lunch. It's pretty much that I just watch.

Colleagues appear time and time again as significant influences for teachers who observed peers demonstrate the skills they saw as necessary in their classrooms. These teachers felt that they were able to gain information through observing others, but recognized that they often had questions about situations that they had not been able to observe. A second mode of interaction for eliciting the practical knowledge of other teachers was to engage the teacher in conversation about her practice.

**Asking Questions of other Teachers**

Many of the teachers discussed asking questions of other teachers as another method of learning from them. When talking about other teachers, Cara said, "We help each other. And we'll ask each other, now what do you think about this?"

Olga said that she felt she had been "lucky" to have an experienced teacher nearby that she could ask questions when she was a new teacher:

> I had the benefit of having a teacher that had been working in child care for the majority of her life and she was in her early 50's. I was really lucky and so I learned a lot just by asking questions of her and if I didn't know how to do something, I would either ask her or another teacher.

Kim also spoke of asking questions of other teachers. She was adamant that it was the other teachers who gave her support when she needed it and not the director or other administrators at her center. She explained:

> It was definitely other teachers. People that I worked with. Directors and assistants in no way mentored me in the classroom ever. If I had an issue, half the time whoever I asked that was admin would never help me. I would do better asking one of the teachers or the teacher I was with.

In choosing who they would ask questions, proximity and the experience level of the teachers continued to be deciding factors. Proximity was helpful, but several specifically mentioned that they purposefully chose whom they questioned. Penny said that she was selective of who she asked questions and that she went to the director if the problem was "severe enough", but that she typically approached one of the teachers.

However, she qualified that by saying, “There is only a few teachers that I will go to that have been here, that I know they know how things run.”

In learning how to do their jobs, these teachers reported looking to other teachers who they thought had more knowledge and experience. Vygotsky (1978) theorized a “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) in which learning leads development. He defined the ZPD as:

> The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 88).

Many of the teachers in this study described utilizing problem solving skills, such as trial and error, to figure out how to be a teacher. They also described seeking out “more capable peers” in order to gain needed information and, in essence, were directing their own learning. When they discovered an area in which they felt their own problem solving did not lead to finding solutions, they looked to peers. Billett (1999) also makes this connection between Vygotskian ideas, such as the ZPD, and workplace learning. As he said, “Alone…the learner might never secure that knowledge and thus experience needless frustration” (p. 156). He believes that both direct and indirect guidance from peers in the workplace enables learners to mature in their ability to successfully perform in their work environment. Other workers often “provide models, clues, and cues to aid and refine performance” (Billett, 1999, p.156).

Just like workplace learners, the teachers in this study determined “who is a credible source of knowledge” (Billett, 1999, p.158). Since their knowledge about

teaching is reportedly based only on their own understandings and experience, and not from formal educational experiences, it is not clear how the teachers are making distinctions between appropriate practices and just what seems to 'work'. Researchers exploring student teachers in certification programs have found that the student teachers' understandings of modeled teaching practices often indicated that the students were more focused on teaching actions that "work" as opposed to understanding the underlying reasons supporting the practice (Zanting, Verloop & Vermunt, 2003).

Research in workplace learning emphasizes the roles of experience and context as important variables in learning how to perform specific tasks related to job performance (Billett, 1999). In his study of workplace learners, Billett found that when asked about how they have learned in the workplace, many workers usually say "just by doing things", "other workers", "observing and listening to others" and "the workplace itself" (p. 151). The teachers in this study are not unique in their approach to learning how to function in their work environment. They reported relying on their own intrinsic abilities, learning from their own experiences in the classroom and learning from others in their environment.

"Sink or Swim", explored the teachers' perceptions of their entry training experiences through two themes. First, because many of these teachers entered the field without significant training and education, received little or no preservice training, and then participated in minimal amounts of inservice training, these teachers described their experience as being "thrown into the classroom". Second, because of this lack of training, the teachers in this study felt they were "figuring out how to do it" on their own, although they relied on close colleagues for guidance. They described three modes for

learning to be a teacher that included utilizing their own intrinsic abilities, learning from experience in their classrooms, and learning from other teachers.

As reported by these teachers, their entry experiences did not contain many opportunities to participate in training classes, but as they began teaching, inservice training became available. In this next section, I explore themes found within the data related to their experiences within actual training classes and their perceptions of those training experiences.

## "VERY GOOD, FOR THE MOST PART": CHILD CARE TEACHERS' DESCRIPTIONS OF INSERVICE TRAINING CLASSES

*They've been very good, for the most part. I've only had one that was very draggy... (Quinn)*

The majority of these teachers would agree with Quinn's assessment of the overall quality of their training experiences. Many said that their training experiences had been "good" or, as Eve said, "Very good." They typically used positive terms when speaking globally about their classes as Mary did when she said, "For the most part, I think the quality of training in this area has been wonderful." Olga also characterized her overall training experiences as positive when she said, "The training that I have received has always been really good training. I've always had a really good, positive experience and I've learned a lot over the years." Ilene claimed that she had "never had any bad experiences with training at all". However, when questioned further, nearly all of these teachers could identify the occasional training session that was not as positive. For

example, when asked if they had ever attended any training where they received incorrect or impractical information, nearly two-thirds of the teachers said they had.

Determining whether or not participants 'like' their training classes is the most common form of assessment for training in the workplace (Alliger, Tannenbaum, Bennett, Jr., Traver, & Shotland, 1997). Participant reactions are considered important because participants are often the considered the customers of training and whether or not they enjoyed the training class can influence later training attendance (Alliger et al., 1997). While a "positive reaction may not ensure learning", a "negative reaction almost certainly reduces the possibility of its occurring" (Kirkpatrick, 1998, p.20). However, research on workplace learning does find a correlation between positive reactions and perceptions concerning how useful participants found the training class (Alliger et al., 1997).

In this section, I will explore five themes found within the teachers' descriptions of their in-service training experiences focusing on their reactions to their training classes and their perceptions about its usefulness. In the first theme, "A Little Bit of Everything", I will explore the topics, sources and funding for training described by these teachers. The second theme, "That Would Never Work For Me", explores the teachers' descriptions of training classes in which the information presented was considered to be impractical, incorrect or had content with which that they did not agree. The third theme, "Better When More Interactive," explores the teachers' preference for interactive training formats such as well as discussions about formats that they do not find as beneficial to their learning. The fourth theme in this section, "You Could Tell She Had Been There", explores the teachers' descriptions of trainers and includes the

qualifications and qualities of trainers they describe as preferable. In the final theme of this section, "You Can Always Hear the Same Thing Twice", I will explore the teacher's descriptions of their experiences with repeated training topics and their reasons for their positive attitudes toward the repetition of topics.

## "A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING": DESCRIPTIONS OF CONTENT

> *It's been a little bit of everything. I've been to, my favorite one was, I got to go to a conferences in Dallas and I got to meet Captain Kangaroo. He did the whole thing and it was really cool. But, we've done everything from, when I worked for the corporate, the corporate had classes. The other day cares have been, well, here's your list, pick something. (Francis)*

Francis had been working in the field for over 18 years when I first interviewed her and she reported a minimum of 360 clock hours of training. According to her, she had participated in training on just about "everything" and when asked about training in specific topic areas, her typical answer was "all of those". In this section, I will explore themes in the teachers' descriptions of their training experiences in terms of the topics of the classes, the sources which includes both course offered at their center and out in the community, and the funding in terms of who pays for the cost of their classes as well as whether or not they are paid for their time spent in training.

### *Topics*

Many of these teachers, especially those with more reported training hours, said that they had participated in, as Eve told me, "lots of training on all of that" when asked about the various topics that they may have attended. Questions about specific topics

were more challenging, particularly for the teachers with greater longevity and greater totals of clock hours. In order to ease this burden, I often mentioned the specific topics listed in the state standards and the teachers responded as to whether or not they had training in that area. The following table lists all of the training topics listed in the Minimum Standards (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006) and the number of teachers who recalled having training in each topic:

| Required No. of Clock Hours | Topic | No. of participants mentioning topic |
|---|---|---|
| At least six of the 15 annual clock hours must be in one or more of these topics | Child growth and development | 0 |
| | Guidance and discipline | 16 |
| | Age-appropriate curriculum; teacher-child interactions | 12 |
| Remaining clock hours must be in one or more of the following topics | Care of children with special needs | 1 |
| | Adult and child health | 6 |
| | Safety | 8 |
| | Risk management | 1 |
| | Identification and care of ill children | 0 |
| | Cultural diversity for children and families | 0 |
| | Professional development (i.e. stress, time management) | 1 |
| | Preventing the spread of communicable diseases | 0 |
| | Topics relevant to a particular age group (i.e. biting; potty training) | 4 |
| | Planning developmentally appropriate learning activities | 13 |
| | Minimum standards | 0 |
| If caregiver provides care for children younger than 24 months of age, one hour of their annual training must cover these topics | Shaken Baby Syndrome; SIDS; early childhood brain development | 3 |

The data in the table reveal that the most commonly mentioned training topics were planning developmentally appropriate learning activities and those dealing with

guidance techniques and the discipline of children. Over 75% of the teachers recalled participating in training on those two topics. The table does not show an additional topic, parent relations, which was mentioned by 14 of the teachers, but does not fit easily into the state's categories.

Topics not mentioned by these participants, but listed as possibilities in the state standards, include: child growth and development; care of children with special needs (with the exception of one teacher who mentioned a class on the topic of ADHD); identification and care of ill children; preventing the spread of communicable diseases (with the exception that several teachers did talk about participating in training on handwashing); cultural diversity for children and families; review of the minimum standards; and only one teacher spoke of training on professional development. Due to the way in which the standards are written, it is possible for teachers never to have training in the above mentioned categories and still fulfill their annual training requirements.

The state standards also require teachers of children less than 24 months of age to have one hour of training each year covering the topics of Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS), Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and early childhood brain development (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006). While nine of the teachers report currently working with children under 24 months of age (which includes the four teachers who "float" among all age groups), only three teachers reported participating in training on these topics.

When these teachers were asked about the content of the training classes they had attended, most indicated that they had participated in classes on a wide variety of topics.

However, when asked about specific topics listed in the state standards, most of the teachers could only recall having participated in training in a few of the categories. Further, there were five categories that none of the teachers listed a topic in any of their experiences.

***Sources for Training Classes***

The teachers in this study described two main sources for training. One was "in-house" training conducted by administrators at their centers, other administrators (in the case of corporate centers), or occasionally by guest speakers from agencies such as the health department. The second source for training described was flyers mailed to the centers. Some of these teachers, like Anna, were "not sure who does" that training, but knew that "pamphlets were sent to the center". Lisa said that her center received "packets from…[local child care resource agencies]…that are free classes that they hang on the time cards and the teachers can just pick at leisure and go when they want to go." According to the state standards, sources for training may include: seminars, workshops, conferences, early childhood classes, self-instructional programs, or planned learning opportunities provided by consultants, qualified directors, caregivers that meet minimum standards qualifications or child-care associations, local school districts, colleges or universities or Licensing (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006). Presumably, the "flyers" came from the above listed sources.

Four of these teachers reported that all of their training had been conducted "in-house" while seven said that all of their training had come from outside sources. The rest of the teachers described a mixture of both in-house and outside training. According to

Beth, “We do in-house, but they also let us get out there because they feel like we need to experience stuff ‘cause there is more ideas out there, just not ours.” Penny described a similar situation in which “a lot of it is done by the center, but you are also required to get a certain amount of hours outside”.

Typically, when the training was held at their center, these teachers reported that it was mandatory for them to attend. According to Nita, it was “you need training hours, so you have to go.” Olga also reported mandatory attendance at in-house training. She explained: “I’ve worked for centers where they provided one training per month and this is the topic.” Conversely, for outside training, the majority of the teachers reported being given the opportunity to choose which classes they wanted to attend. As Olga described, “They give you a list of all the trainings that are in the area and you just pick and choose what you want to go to and do and what you feel like is where you need to work.” Helen also reported that administrators sometimes “highlighted” classes that “might pertain to you”, but that “generally we’ll get a list of topics and then get to choose”. Most of the teachers who were allowed to choose which training classes they would attend thought this was appropriate because, as Ilene said, “everybody knows where their weak points and their strong points are”. Mary, however, found this problematic. She explained:

> I think 90% of the time they find a class that I can guarantee is the cheapest and not necessarily half the time has anything to do with their field or what they need to know. It’s usually the easiest, the cheapest and the shortest. And that is usually what I’ve always seen people do. And it’s not helpful in my eyes. It is a waste.

To summarize, these teachers describe both in-house and outside training sources. In-house training was typically conducted by someone within their center or organization where outside sources came from a variety of community resources.

### *Who Pays for Training*

Questions about training sources led to discussions concerning who paid the registration fees for training classes and whether or not teachers got paid for their time spent in training. Amendments to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act mandate that teachers must be paid for time spent in training when it is required for their jobs, but there is variation in the rulings of regional offices of the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor (Pekow, 1996). In Texas, employers are required to pay child care teachers for both their time spent in training and the registration fees (if applicable) for classes that fulfill the minimum requirement of 15 clock hours of training per year (Texas Child Care, 2005). However, several of these teachers spoke about purposely searching for free training so that they would not have to pay for it themselves. Joyce said that she "always went to free trainings, because [otherwise she] would have to pay for them." Lisa, who works at the same center said, "I usually went to free classes so I didn't have to pay. My time was paid for, but the class was free." Penny described teachers working together to find sources for their "outside" training hours. As she said, "All the teachers kind of work together and we have a sign-up sheet or they will say, hey this is going on, this is free, this is really cheap…"

There was great variation in response to questions about who pays for training and this was confounded by the fact that many of these teachers had worked in several

different centers with different practices regarding this issue. In general, three of these teachers said that they have always had to pay the registration fees for their classes while six said that they have always been paid for them. Others reported that some of their classes were paid for and some not while still others reported that they were either paid for their time or the class was paid for, but not both. As for their time in classes, only six reported always getting paid for their time.

In this theme, "A Little Bit of Everything", I have explored the teachers' descriptions of the content of their training classes including topics, sources and funding. While most of these teachers indicated that they had received training on a wide variety of topics, when asked about the specific topic areas listed in state standards, almost half of the teachers could not recall participating in training classes in at least five of the suggested content areas. Sources of training reported by these teachers included both in-house training, conducted by administrators within their organizations or guest speakers, or outside sources, which included a variety of community resources. There was also great variation in the teachers' responses to question about funding for training due to the varying practices of the centers in which they were employed. Approximately one third of the teachers reporting that their registration fees had always been paid for them and approximately one third reported that they have consistently been paid for their time spent in training.

While the teachers felt like they had participated in training on "a little bit of everything" and their overall perceptions of their experiences were positive, most of the teachers had a story about a training class that caused them concern. In the following theme, I will explore those instances.

## "THAT WOULD NEVER WORK FOR ME": IMPRACTICAL CONTENT

> *I don't think that they were impractical on a larger scale, that it's probably possible. At our center, especially here, we do deal with a lot of the discipline children from other schools that are removed. So, things that will work in one center obviously wouldn't work in another. So, I wouldn't want to say that they were impractical. Yes, in the back of my mind I was thinking to myself that would never work for me, but that doesn't mean it doesn't work in the perfect center. It's not that I thought they were wrong. Some it just would never work for me, but for the person next to me? Possibly. (Mary)*

In the above quote, Mary explained why she thinks some of her training has been impractical. According to her, it was not that the ideas of the trainer were incorrect, but instead, she found them to be unrealistic in the context of her center. The belief that some of the ideas presented in training would not work in their classroom was shared by most of these teachers. Almost all of the teachers had an example of a class where they felt the information had been impractical, incorrect or that they just simply did not agree with the ideas presented. In this theme, I will explore these occasions in which the teachers felt that the content of some their training included information that would "never work" in their classrooms.

### *We Don't Live in a Textbook World*

> *I've been to trainings that tell you that this is the way that you should do it and it will work, but they are reading out of a textbook and they forget that we don't live in a textbook world and these children have not grown up in these perfect environments and it is not always going to work that way. You have to remember*

*there are other factors. And so it is unrealistic a lot of times, some of the stuff that they will tell you is unrealistic. (Olga)*

Like Olga, several of these teachers spoke about training they had attended in which they found some of the ideas presented to be unrealistic and not applicable to their classroom. Randy explained this when she told me that some of the ideas presented are not representative of the "real world". She thought that some of her initial training "didn't prepare me for what I was walking into here" because it "pictured a picture-perfect child care facility. And my kids have been going here for several years, I knew better to begin with."

Penny also felt like some of the training was unrealistic for her in terms of the expectations of teachers. As she said:

> Sometimes I feel like, training is from up here. I feel like saying, would you like to spend a day in my classroom because what you are saying isn't, and I'm sure they've probably gone the steps to get to where they are, but sometimes it gets too complicated and it needs to be more practical. A lot of the teachers, they either come in really early or stay late to get everything done that they expect. When you talk about training, it's like when am I supposed to do this and do this? And who is going to watch them [the children] while I'm supposed to be doing this? It seems like there is a lot left out. It's like do this, okay [pause] when?

For these teachers, unrealistic portrayals of life in classrooms and what they saw as unrealistic expectations of teachers led them to think that the information presented in the training would not work in their classroom. Research investigating the inservice training experiences of elementary school teachers has also found that teachers are

frustrated by inservice training classes in which they feel the content is not relevant to their experiences in their classroom (Fiszer, 2004). According to Fiszer, "teachers consider it a waste of time to listen to 'outside experts' talk about teaching skills that infrequently connect to the current problems encountered in the classroom" (p.5). Several of the teachers in this study felt that the content of some of their training classes included descriptions and scenarios they could not connect to the "real world" challenges they faced in their classrooms.

***Incorrect Information***

Another reason given by four of these teachers as to why some of the information presented "would never work" in their classrooms was that the information was simply incorrect. Typically, the incorrect information concerned state standards or health/safety related procedures. In Doreen's case, she received incorrect information concerning the state-mandated child/teacher ratios. She immediately recognized the information as incorrect, but was frustrated that a person who was teaching a class would give incorrect information. She elaborated:

> I looked it up myself in a book. It was actually someone who didn't know offhand and was giving training from a different center. She said, oh, I know what they are. I've been working in child care for like twenty years. You know, and I'm like, we kind of looked at each other and said that doesn't sound right. We wrote it down and then later we looked it up.

Beth, on the other hand, did not realize the information she had received in a training class was incorrect. She explained:

> They gave us the wrong procedure for sanitizing the stuff in the kitchen and the way to do the serving because I never knew you had to have gloves on get bread out and give it to the kids. They weren't teaching us right and I got in trouble one day when the lady [health department inspector] came in one day because I didn't have my glove on, but I didn't know.

Anna described occasions in which she had received incorrect information about both handwashing and diaper changing procedures. In her case, she went to outside trainings where specific procedures were taught, but then when she came back to her center, a different procedure was required. While she described the majority of her training experiences as very helpful, she felt like in these instances "you really learned nothing of what they said the class was supposed to be teaching".

According to these teachers, it was rare to receive incorrect information in a training class, but when they did, it was typically related to sanitation procedures or, as in Doreen's example, specific requirements from the state standards. Both of these content areas are concerned with procedures or criteria that are often amended or changed by regulating agencies, as opposed to theoretical concepts such as appropriate practices based on child development theory. While it is easier to see how mistakes in these amendable areas could be made, particularly if the trainer has not kept up-to-date, the teachers still found these instances of incorrect information to be frustrating.

***Don't Agree With***

A final reason given by these teachers as to why they thought that some of the information presented in their classes "would never work" in their classroom, was that

they had a seemingly different philosophical opinion from that being presented by the trainer. While only two teachers described experiences in which they philosophically disagreed with the trainer, in both cases the information they found problematic concerned appropriate ways of relating to children. One of these teachers, Lisa, found that she sometimes had a difference of opinion concerning discipline. In response to a question concerning the helpfulness of trainings in general, she replied:

> Yeah, I mean, in some aspects I found them to be helpful. I don't always agree with what people are saying as far as discipline goes. It is just one of those topics. I just don't think a lot of things work. I don't know. I'm kind of old school when it comes to discipline.

Eve also recalled an incident where her understandings of appropriate interactions differed from that of a presenter:

> We went to one, actually, this last year. And it was the strangest class I ever had because you no longer tell a child, oh, what a wonderful job you are doing. That you let them feel that they are doing wonderful. When I got through with that training, it was all I could do not to raise my hand and say this was the most useless thing, it's ridiculous. You spend your whole life encouraging kids. I mean, you have to give them that encouragement to help them accomplish what they are trying to do. It was just… strange.

In both of these cases, the teachers did not see the issue to be about right answers as much as differing opinions. For these teachers, the ideas presented in training challenged their personal viewpoints causing the teachers to decide that the information was not helpful and would not work in their classrooms.

In this theme, "That Would Never Work For Me", I have explored the teacher descriptions of training experiences in which they thought content of the course did not apply to their particular needs and was not helpful to them. Three subthemes highlight their explanations as to why they found the content of those classes objectionable. First, some of the teachers described training content that they found to be unrealistic in terms of their experiences in their classrooms. Second, several of the teachers described classes in which they received incorrect information. Finally, two teachers gave examples of training classes in which they experienced difficulty in connecting with the ideas expressed by trainer as they found those ideas to be different from their own philosophical understandings about interacting with children.

As the teachers in this study provided insight into their perceptions of the content of their training classes, they also discussed their feelings about the format of these classes. In the following theme, I explore the teachers' descriptions of the formats used in their training classes and perceptions about how these formats contributed to their experiences in classes and their understandings of how these formats contribute to their learning.

## "BETTER WHEN MORE INTERACTIVE": DESCRIPTIONS OF TRAINING FORMATS

> *I like them better when they've been more interactive. Like I've done trainings where you will be talking about activities for children where they bring the activities out and we actually get to do the activities. I prefer hands-on. I learn better that way. (Olga)*

Nearly two-thirds of the teachers in this study agree with Olga regarding the format of their training classes. In general, they prefer interactive modes of training in which the participants in the class are permitted to interact with each other and also those in which participants are provided opportunities for hands-on experiences. In this theme, "Better When More Interactive", I will explore the teachers' descriptions of their preferred training formats which include group discussions and hands-on activities. I will also include their descriptions of training formats that they feel are not as helpful in their learning experiences.

***Group Discussions***

Many of these teachers found group discussions to be one of their most preferred formats for training. As Kim said, "The ones I found more entertaining and more beneficial were the ones that involve something, you know, involved the people. Group discussions or acting out situations." The opportunity to interact with others was seen as beneficial because it allowed the teachers themselves to share experiences. Ilene said these group discussions helped her to feel "not so alone" when she has had difficulties as a teacher. She explained:

> I enjoy it because, you know, the things that I do sometimes, you look at what you did wrong or you get a little bit frustrated with them and you think you are all by yourself, but then someone else tells you I had this issue and you are like oh, I did, too. So, I think it is a lot better for that, because you, with lecture type, not that they don't help because you can always pull something out of them, there's no shared experiences. There's no I'm not so alone in the things that I do.

Conle (1996) has used the term ‘resonance’ to describe a particular way that teachers develop practical knowledge through their interactions with other teachers. When teachers hear narratives of other teachers’ experiences, they often make connections to their own experiences. Resonance is an educational process in which teachers see one experience in terms of another, even when there is not exact correspondence between the two stories (Conle, 1996). According to Conle, “resonance is occurring unintentionally” as teachers interact and discuss their experiences in the classroom with their peers (p.315). The way in which the teachers in this study discuss group discussion and other opportunities to share experiences with their colleagues seems very similar to Conle’s understanding of ‘resonance’. For these teachers, stories of experience heard from other teachers, seem to ‘resonate’ in ways that further their own understandings of their experiences with children and in the classroom.

This shared experience of group discussions permits teachers the opportunity to “add a little and then receive, too, from other people” as Helen put it. Or, as Quinn said, “pick up a lot of input from each other”. Not only did the teachers think they had received the planned content of the training session, they also had received the added bonus of input from other teachers. According to Mary, this gave her “a lot more ideas and a lot more to take home” as well as “more ideas than just that one trainer”. Ilene explained further:

> It’s always nice to hear, because with different situations, it’s always nice to have more than one method of how to handle things. So, not necessarily, you know, just what people have done wrong, but different people [give] advice so you that you can find one that, not just one suggestion that you use and it doesn’t work and

then you are left with what am I supposed to do with it, but multiple people give different things that you can try with that and other things that they have found that help in other situations.

While these teachers found group discussions to be beneficial, there was also recognition that they can go astray. Even though Nita said that she found group discussions to be helpful, she also knew that "you can get off on different topics" and get "away from what you are trying to accomplish". Olga discussed this same idea when she elaborated her thoughts concerning this format for training:

> I think they can vary in a lot of ways. You get the opportunity to share ideas with other teachers and so you can get lots of really good ideas and great stuff. But then occasionally you will have somebody that everybody wants them to be quiet now so that you can finish the topic and get everything taken care of so you can go home eventually.

For many of the teachers in this study, group discussions are a preferred format for training because this format provides the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from hearing about the experiences of other teachers.

***Hands-On Activities***

In addition to group discussions, many of these teachers also mentioned hands-on activities as another interactive format that they preferred and found to be beneficial. Francis finds this format to be more entertaining as well as educational. She explained:

> I like those. I like the ones with activities. And you go in there and the teacher involves you because, I tell you what, when they get up there and they talk, you

are fighting to stay awake. I've taken a couple just recently and it was just fun. I mean, I learned more than I have in a while because they were fun.

Nita also described classes in which hands-on activities were provided as entertaining or fun. As an example, she described a training class on art activities in which the trainers provided recipes and allowed the participants to be involved in making the art materials being demonstrated. She explained: "It was a five hour class but it didn't bother me to sit there for five hours because I played and played."

According to Fiszer (2004), "the reality about traditional professional development for teachers is that it is often taught using methods not aligned with active learning". In this case, Fiszer was talking about inservice training for elementary school teachers, but these child care teachers also report the desire for more training opportunities that include hands-on, or active, learning activities. Fiszer also points out that teachers are often required to listen to experts describe active, hands-on learning for their students, while not using the techniques that advocate for teaching adults (Fiszer, 2004). Other researchers exploring the inservice experiences of certified teachers have found correlations between teachers' self-reported increases in skills and opportunities for active learning (e.g. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). For the teachers in this study, the desire for active learning activities were based on the idea that this format was "less boring" than other formats and that activities provided greater opportunities for learning.

Randy said that she preferred hands-on activities over formats in which she would have to "sit there and listen to somebody talk all day" because she thinks that the information just "goes in one ear and out the other" in those cases. Like Eve, she thought

that the “best ones” are those where “you actually take part”. Gin gave a detailed explanation of an example of hands-on activity in which the participants were given the opportunity to role-play teacher/child interactions:

> We did a whole one hour course of, we had to pick a card to tell us what job we were going to be. If you were going to be the teacher or if you were going to be the child that says no and throws a fit and then they would role play it the wrong way and we’d talk about what went wrong and how you could’ve done it different and then they’d show us the proper way. And it was not always the same proper way. I mean, you know what I mean? No, that it was just this is the way that you do it, but they would show you other ways of how you could handle it. And it really helps because you find that every child is so different and depending on who you are…

According to these teachers, interactive formats that included active learning allowed the participants the opportunity to practice the skills they are trying to learn within a context that could provide immediate feedback. Mary said, “This is a hands-on job and I feel like the training should be hands-on.” According to her, “you are not learning enough by just sitting there listening to them talk about ideas,” particularly if the class is a “craft seminar”.

While interactive formats like group discussions and hands-on activities were the preferred format for many of these teachers, there was recognition that not every topic might be conducive to using hands-on format. Gina explained:

> I mean seriously. Sometimes, it is just like they wrote stuff to fill pages. I mean, I really need something that is hands-on, whether it was going into different

> classrooms and actually making a craft or singing songs or role-playing or playing a game. There's some I know you can't do that with. I know there is a few that, a very few, that you just couldn't do as well that way. I think, you know, that maybe Powerpoints would help them be better.

Mary also thought that trainers should make use of visual aides whenever possible because "obviously not all subjects can be hands-on". For her, visual aides are a "big deal". She said that "just coming in and talking to child care employees" does not "get the point across". Gina would agree. She thinks that if a trainer cannot make the format interactive through hands-on activities, then "if it has a visual, that's great, just as long as it shows me something".

The majority of the teachers in this study showed a preference for interactive formats, particularly those that included active learning such as hands-on activities. They found these to be less "boring" and more beneficial. While they recognized that not all content might be conducive to interactive formats, they felt that when it was, it added to their learning experiences.

***No Lecturing***

While the majority of the teachers in this study said that lecturing formats were the dominant mode used in their training classes, few of them actually preferred that format. While Gina thought that using Powerpoint in the course of a lecture might make them "better", Kim was of the opposite opinion. She said:

> I am so done with Powerpoint and everyone does it now. You hardly have a person actually sitting there and teaching something with your hands-on to keep

you interested and you are not just reading words off of a screen. Definitely hands-on and group discussion works better. The Powerpoint and just a stand-up lecture doesn't work for me at all. I had one that was like a comedian, she was hilarious, but I didn't learn anything.

While Kim found some lectures entertaining, she did not think that format was most beneficial to her. Maria, however, did not find the lecture-based classes she had attended entertaining. Instead, she found most of them to be "boring". She said:

I think if we were in the business world or in the electronic world, sitting down and having a lecture is probably a good way to come about a training. But, for child care employees, especially on a Saturday, you've spent your whole week already, I mean, for me, I don't want to go sit in a lecture for 45 minutes and listen to somebody tell me solely what they do and what they think I should do. I don't go to a training for somebody to tell me what I should do, I go to a training for the ideas. It seems like the lectures are more apt to giving you, this is what I do and this is what you should do, and I don't think that is the right way to come about it.

For her, not only was the lecture format more boring, she also found it to be more didactic. She felt that they trainer was giving them directions as opposed to providing them with ideas for practice.

While lectures were described as the most common format of the training classes these teachers had attended, the vast majority reported that they found this format to be the most boring and, in many cases, they said they that did find the information as beneficial.

***Bad Videos***

Another format that these teachers found less beneficial was videos. Only five of the teachers reported having participated in training with this format and none of these teachers had any positive comments concerning the use of video for training. Not only did these teachers feel like they learn less from this format, they also had problems with the quality of the videos themselves. Lisa was adamant that they were not a good format for her. She said, "I don't like them. I don't. They're old. They are very old. They aren't up-to-date. They are not actual. They are like staged." For Olga, however, the problem was not as much about the quality of the videos; it was more about video not being a format in which she felt she benefited. She explained:

> I don't like the videos. That's one of the hardest things for me to do, it's just hard for me to pick out the information and focus on a video. Most of the stuff I have done has either been lecture or hands-on because that is how I learn the best. So, I stick with that.

Gina recalled a video training she had attended and said, "The one I took here was actually a course put on video for us to take and that's how we did that and it was not that meaningful. It didn't seem like it, it was pretty boring." Not only did she find it boring, she found the content inappropriate and unhelpful. She recalled:

> It was like he was lecturing on film. Which was even worse than to be standing there lecturing. Just lecturing. And he would ask you some questions, but, to me, it was almost like, it really wasn't a video that we should've watched. It was more for directors, so we had no control over half of the stuff he was talking about. And then, to make it worse, he was boring and it was a lecture. I could not

believe I wasted my lunch break on it…We did questions at the end. Honestly, I'm really glad they gave us the questions beforehand. If they hadn't of given me the questions beforehand, I would've have gotten any of them just because, I was looking for the answers and even with that, I was having trouble finding it. It wasn't something he really stressed on for a long time. You actually just seemed to have to answer a couple of the questions to make sure you really watched it.

She questioned the appropriateness of the content of the video she saw because she did not see it as useful for her work in the classroom, as if it is just training for the sake of clock hours. Nita went further to suggest a video she had watched and was counted toward her mandated training hours was not something that the state would allow. Of a video training she attended she said, "I don't even know if it was legal". She continued, "The director would give me a video to watch and I would take notes on it. I mean, she rented the video from a child care thing, but I just took notes and she threw it in my file. And that was an hour [clock hour of training]."

While Kim did not question the legitimacy of video training, she did think that they were not useful to her understandings of classroom life as the images they portrayed are unrealistic. She elaborated:

The corporate I used to work for did a lot of training on video and they are very unrealistic. They have ratios with four kids and one teacher in a three year old classroom. Okay, that is just not even going to happen for one. So, videos I feel are very, if they are not going to be totally realistic about situations, don't bother. You cannot apply a class of four three year olds, I'm sorry we have 15 three year olds with one teacher. Try to figure that out. It makes the person kind of go, oh

right, she has time to get it done, she has four kids, and then it gets that whole attitude of this is not even real so why watch it. You turn the focus out because what they are showing you is unrealistic.

For the teachers in this study who had participated in video training, the general conclusion was that it was not helpful. In particular, the teachers found videos the scenarios to be unrealistic and the quality of the videos themselves to be poor. Several also felt that this is a format that is difficult to learn from as the content is often simply an image of a person conducting a lecture.

Overall, the teachers in this study showed a preference for interactive formats. In particular, they found group discussions and hands-on activities to be more a more entertaining and more beneficial format for connecting information to their practice. Two other formats, lectures and videos, were described as being less entertaining and the teachers felt that they had less of an impact on their learning.

While the format of their classes were seen as important element in their participation of training classes, the speaker was also seen as having an impact on their experience in the class. In the next theme, I explore the teachers' perception of their trainers.

## "YOU COULD TELL SHE HAD BEEN THERE": DESCRIPTIONS OF TRAINERS

*I mean they pretty much knew what they were talking about. I tried to find out things about the people if I could. If they had a background in child care, if they even worked in a center because I don't like taking training from someone who just has book knowledge. If they don't live it, then they don't really, then they*

*can't sit there and feel it, you know, your frustration, your aggravation, if they have never actually done it. Pretty much everyone that I have to gone to training with had experience. They had been in the field, they had been directors, they had been, you know, cooks, they had been everything. And that really helps. First of all because I know that they have been there. They had the day care experience. (Kim)*

Kim spoke for many of the teachers when she talked about how she saw the background experience of the trainer as an important element in the usefulness of the training she had attended. As discussed earlier, the majority of these teachers described their training experiences in positive terms; however, almost all could give examples of training sessions they had attended that the speaker was seen as the issue when they felt the class was not helpful to them. According to these teachers, both the qualifications and the speaking style of the trainer are important elements for training.

In Texas, the Minimum Standards do not "have specific criteria established for someone to be a trainer or provider of clock hours" (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006, p.30) nor do they "approve or endorse resources or trainers" (p.45). However, the training itself must meet specific criteria. First, the clock hours must be obtained through the sources previously discussed. Second, all training must include: (1) stated learning objectives, (2) a curriculum, which includes experiential or applied activities, (3) an evaluation or assessment tool to determine if participants have met the stated objectives, and (4) a certificate of completion from the training source (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006). Although the state standards

do not have criteria for trainers, the teachers in this study listed several qualities for trainers they thought were necessary.

### *Trainer Qualifications That Includes Real-World Experience*

When these teachers were asked about how knowledgeable they felt their trainers had been, most thought that their trainers had been knowledgeable and that they had obviously "been there". However, many of teachers had examples of training sessions they had attended where the speaker did not appear to have the knowledge necessary to teach the topic nor the experience in the field. Typically, when they spoke of trainers as not having knowledge, they were referring to the trainer's experience in child care settings and not necessarily educational qualifications. Francis was the only teacher that mentioned education when she wondered about the background of a trainer. She gave the following example:

> I had one and I just think the lady was a dingbat. I was like, why is she teaching this? I don't think she ever took a child development course in her life. And she kept referring to how she disciplined her [own] children. And how… it was just like a waste of money. Other than that, I haven't had any bad ones. I've had some that have gone, I'm going to sleep now, but other than that, not bad.

When questioned further, Francis said that "you really didn't know what she was talking about". This memory lead her to suggest: "I think that every now and then someone coming in and looking into their class, on how they teach the class, to see how it goes" as a possible strategy for preventing "dingbats" from becoming trainers. Other teachers thought they could tell by the manner in which trainers presented information as

to whether or not the trainer had experience in the field and was someone worth listening to. Gina gave a description of a trainer that she felt was knowledgeable and had real-world experiences. She said:

> She actually had been in the situations and you could tell by the way she was talking that she knew what she was talking about. It wasn't any of the…people that just come out with I think you should da da da…and you know they've never really been there. You could tell she had been there. She was very interesting. I think she even cut a few jokes, just to keep you, you know.

Gina felt that in some of the training she has attended, the trainers did not have the levels of experience that led participants into believing that what they said was valid and helpful. Beth also attended trainings where she "felt that the presenter needed to sit down and let the ones that have been in child care do more because…the presenter didn't know what she was talking about." Eve said that "several times I've been to a training where I think this person has not had any direct experience with a child or they wouldn't be saying what they are saying." Real world experience seems to be an important characteristic for trainers for these teachers. The lack of the real world experience of some trainers led the teachers to question what the trainers was trying to teach and also led some to discount the content. Gina said she wonders if the trainers themselves believed what they were teaching. She explained, "I think some people do a more practice what I preach, not what I do. Does that make sense? Like this is what you should do, but it's not what you're going to do, but what you should do."

According to the teachers in this study, the background experience of the trainer plays an important role in their ability to connect to the ideas and information being

presented. For most of the teachers, the crucial factor was not the formal educational level of the trainer, but their past experiences actually working in a center and with children. While the state standards to not list requirements for trainers (Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, 2006), many of these teachers thought that trainers must have "real world" experiences working with children to be credible.

***Charismatic or Boring Trainers***

> *Some of them were helpful and some of them were not. To be honest with you, a lot of them, I didn't even pay attention. I have a short attention span and if they are not going to make it fun and they are not going to make it hands-on, I'm not going to pay attention. No one is paying attention. (Lisa)*

For some of these teachers, the trainer's personality and speaking ability played a key role in how they perceived the helpfulness of the training class. A few of the teachers said that they chose what training classes they attended based on, as Eve said, "who's giving it". Olga spoke at length on how important she thought the personality of the trainer was in relation to how she received the material being presented. She said she preferred someone with a "go-get-em kind of a personality" that was "enthusiastic and not someone that is going to stand up there monotone and just give you the facts and nothing else."

More than one third of these teachers mentioned examples of training sessions that were boring and most attributed this to the trainer. Joyce talked about boring sessions that were "hard to sit through". Lisa talked about training sessions that were "horrible". When asked why they were horrible, she replied, "I couldn't stay awake."

She said she tried to look for sessions that she did not "think are going to bore me to death". Gina said that "a lot of the trainings we go to are really boring" and that it is "a waste of time if it is boring". While the format has a part in this (and thus, the preference for interactive formats), many of these teachers also mention the skill of the trainer in making the class not so boring. Quinn said, "Sometimes when I see that person's name, I will not take the class because it's going to be boring. Or if I know someone has been to that class, I will ask them, did you go to Mary Smith's class? How was she this time?"

For many of these teachers, the personality of the speaker was seen as an important element in the quality of their training experiences. The style of the speaker often was attributed to whether or not a class was considered "boring" and could keep their attention. Regardless of the quality of the content, if the trainer did not have the personality characteristics to keep them focused and engaged, the training class was not seen as beneficial.

**"YOU CAN CERTAINLY HEAR THE SAME THING TWICE" (REPEATED TOPICS)**

> *You can certainly hear the same thing twice… I think every training is beneficial even if it is something you know or had before, if you are really thinking about how it can benefit you and your babies. And, of course, each instructor has a little bit different take on the same subject. (Helen)*

Based on the limited number of training topics described by these teachers, many of the teachers in this study discussed repetition of topics as being a common occurrence in their experience. For the majority of these teachers, repetition of topics was seen as a

positive experience due to the ways that different trainers would often have different perspectives and, even if it was the same trainer, they might have something new to add.

For Francis, repeated topics could mean different information. She said, "Even if it is just something labeled the same thing I've already taken, I've noticed when I went in and it was a different teacher, I've learned something different." Although she may have "already done this", she still thought that "for the most part, they've always added something new to it." Quinn also felt that she learned new information when she repeated topics. According to her, "Every instructor is different and may give you a little more story about something." Kim also said that she "would go to a couple of them twice if they were taught by different people. You know, I figured there may be something new that they may add that the other one didn't." However, if she "started seeing that it was the same information every time", then she said she would stop going to those repeated topics.

Mary found repeated topics helpful whether it was a different trainer or the same trainer. She explained:

> I do find it helpful. Because it doesn't matter if it is the same person both times, there is still going to be new ideas and a new view on certain things. I could go to the same person six months apart and they are still going to have new ideas that they discovered and new ways to deal with it that they've heard about. So, it's always a new topic.

While the number of training topics described by these teachers was relatively small and the likelihood of repeated topics common, the majority of these teachers did not find repeating topics problematic. They felt that hearing the "same thing twice" was

beneficial to their understandings about practice because different trainers often had different perspectives and would often add something more to the class. Even when repeating a topic with the same trainer at a later date, they felt that hearing the information again was helpful and that often the trainer might have added new information to the class.

In this section, "Very Good, For the Most Part", I have explored the teachers' descriptions of their inservice training experiences through five themes focusing on their reactions to their training classes and their perceptions about its usefulness. In general, the teachers in this study described their training experiences in positive terms, but almost all give examples of the occasional training class that they did not find as beneficial. In the first theme, "A Little Bit of Everything", I explored the teachers' descriptions of the topics, sources and the funding their inservice training classes which included a relatively small number of content topics compared to the suggestions in the state standards, two major sources for training which included "in-house" and "outside" training found in the community, and variation in funding for both registration fees and the pay for time spent in training. The second theme, "That Would Never Work For Me", explored the teachers' descriptions of training classes in which the information presented was considered to be impractical, incorrect or had content that they did not agree with. The third theme, "Better When More Interactive," explored the teachers' preference for interactive training formats such group discussions and hands-on activities as well as discussions about formats that they did not find as helpful which included lectures and videos. The fourth theme in this section, "You Could Tell She Had Been There", explored the teachers' descriptions of trainers and the two trainer qualifications they felt

were most important which included "real world" experiences and charismatic personality styles. In the final theme of this section, "You Can Always Hear the Same Thing Twice", I explored the teacher's descriptions of their experiences with repeated training topics and their understanding that these were beneficial due to the ways in which different trainers had different perspectives and also often added new information.

In the previous theme, I presented finding related to the teachers' experiences in training classes and their perceptions of those experiences. I now turn to the teachers' perceptions about how they think their training has influenced their classroom practice and their understandings about the role that training plays in the field.

## "IT CAN ONLY MAKE THING BETTER": CHILD CARE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

> *You've got to have that training to get the good quality. You know, for the person and for the classroom. I really do think that's important, very important. I think it enhances it. I really think it enhances it. It can't hurt it. It can only make things better. (Beth)*

Throughout the interviews with these teachers, the idea that training was important was heard over and over again. For most of these teachers, training was seen as something that "can only make things better" and had an impact on their practice as well as impact on important issues in the field such as quality and turnover. In this section I will explore four themes that were revealed in the transcript data concerning the ways in which these teachers elaborated their thoughts on the importance of training. In the first theme, "It's All Worth Something to Me", I will explore how these teacher thought that training has influenced their practice in more general ways ("It Gets the

Spark Going") and also with specific stories in which the teachers described training that they thought altered their thinking in more complex ways ("That Training Has Always Stuck With Me"). In the next theme, "To Have Quality Child Care, You Do Need Some Trainings", I will explore the teachers' practical discourse on the relationship between training and quality and their understanding that teachers play a central role in the quality of child care centers. In the third theme, "Even With All the Training in the World…There Will Still Be Turnover", I will explore the teachers' understandings of the relationship between training and teacher turnover in which the many of the teachers initially responded that the two were not related ("It Goes Back to Hiring") while others did see a relationship ("Not Enough Training"), but that ultimately the majority did think that training can have an impact on this issue in the field ("Training Might Help [Reduce] Turnover"). In the final theme of this section, "It Varies From Person to Person", I will explore the teachers description of their own positive attitudes toward training and their perceptions of their coworkers' attitudes that they sometimes see as negative.

## "IT'S ALL WORTH SOMETHING TO ME": CHILD CARE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF TRAINING ON PRACTICE

> *They've influenced a lot, actually. Just because, you know, you get different ideas from things and like me just starting out, being only nineteen, that helps. Because I don't have any previous experience to fall back on, I'm still just learning. So, you know, when you tell me something or you teach me something, or I go to a training and I learn something new to incorporate to help the children that I am teaching, it's all worth something to me. (Ilene)*

The teachers in this study thought that training was important and had an influence on their classroom practice. Since the term "practice" was not part of the practical discourse of these teachers, my questions about this issue were typically phrased in terms of how they thought training influenced "what they did in their classroom" or "how they thought it helped them learn what to do as a teacher". In general, the teachers saw training as an opportunity to learn and felt that they had benefited from their training experiences. Most thought, as Ilene did, that "it's all worth something to me". The teachers' descriptions about the influence of training on their practice will be discussed through two subthemes. First, the teachers often spoke about effect of training in terms of how it inspired them to try new ideas and provided a sense of renewal (It Gets the Spark Going). Second, several of the teachers spoke of deeper understanding of howing their training experiences have influenced their practice ("That Training Has Always Stuck With Me").

***"It Gets the Spark Going"***

> *It gets the spark going for me. You know, I'd like to go once a month because it will get your spark going and everyday you'll get up and say, okay, I'm going to do this that she talked about. But after a month or two, you just run out of those ideas because they can only give you so many. (Mary)*

As Mary described above, many of these teachers thought one of the ways that participation in training classes influenced their practice as by motivating and encouraging them as teachers. In this subtheme, I will explore the more general ways

that these teachers thought that training influenced teachers in terms of inspiring them to try new ideas and by providing a sense of renewal.

Inspiration to try New Ideas

Many of these teachers thought that training "gets the spark going" by inspiring them to try "new ideas". While these ideas may not be "new" to the field, they are certainly new to these teachers, particularly to those who are just entering the profession. These ideas ultimately influenced the teachers' practice by providing them with curriculum activities or techniques for classroom management. Ilene said she thought that "trainings are awesome" because they provided her with ideas for practice. She said, "Just like adults, kids get bored, and they get bored so much faster than we do." She felt that she was often "doing the same thing every week" and that she had "run out of ideas." She described training as "just continual learning" and thought that when she participated in training she learned "something new to show them [the children]" that she could "adapt in different ways." She thought that these ideas affected her practice in terms of how she managed her classroom which "ultimately makes the mood a whole lot better" thereby making her classroom "a whole lot less boring".

For Joyce, new ideas for curriculum activities were particularly helpful to her. She works with two year olds and said, "They really like to do art projects and I don't know that many. So, I like to get new ideas." Beth also thought that training influenced her practice by providing new ideas for curriculum activities. She thought that "make-n-take" classes were especially helpful. She said, "I think we need a few more trainings like that" to "give the teachers some more ideas". She said that "there [are] teachers out

there that want to do stuff, but they don't got it up here" as she pointed to her head. She added that "a lot of times they will come to me for ideas because I've been in this so long."

Even teachers who had been working in the field for longer periods of time thought that training provided opportunities to obtain new ideas. As Lisa explained:

> You get, not worn out, but you start to lose the great ideas and all that stuff. So, it helps sometimes to go to a training because you could have this way that you do something over and over and over again and go to a training, they give you kind of a twist on it. And that is what makes training, especially working with children who everyday is a new day, and you sometimes find that you get caught up doing the same thing everyday not realizing I'm doing it, but just kind of going into a common day for children and that doesn't work.

Several of the teachers described training classes and the ideas they received from those classes as being inspirational. When they learned about new ideas and techniques, they were eager to go back to their classroom and try them out. Kim described a training class on sensory activities that she found motivational. She said:

> I had never heard of Gak [sensory material similar to play-doh]. I had never heard of making snow. Things like that that I had never actually done. You know, everyone has done the play-doh thing but Gak and using all these different kind of things like that… I'd be really excited about going back and trying right away with the toddlers.

Eve also talked about being eager to try new ideas she had learned in training classes. She said, "If it is a good training session, I know I'm ready to get back and try

out this new thing." In the same way, Cara found that some of her training classes boosted her motivation. She explained:

> At the time that you are going through the class and they are talking about it, you know, yeah, that makes sense. And you are all pumped up because that is what you are going to do. You know, because they give you ideas as to how to take care of the class.

Anna also talked about training classes that had inspired her to try new things in the classroom. When I asked her if she could describe a specific training class that inspired her, she said:

> Actually, it's after every training. I always want to try it because it is something new and maybe it's going to help what I'm already doing. It is. It's inspirational. It's educational. I mean, how else are you going to learn something new unless you go to a training?

For these teachers, training classes often created enthusiasm for teaching and motivated them to use the information they were provided in their classroom. New teachers were able to learn new ideas and techniques and experienced teachers were felt reinvigorated and renewed.

### Providing a Sense of Renewal

For more experienced teachers, another way that training was thought to have influenced their practice was by providing them with a sense of renewal. These teachers also found many of their training classes to be motivating and energizing. Beth said, "It's kind of like a refresher course. It's like anything we do, you need a refresher every so

often." She connects this idea of a "refresher" to the issue of "burn-out" in the field. She thinks that training can help revive a teacher who is feeling overburdened. She added, "I think it can renew them and make them feel like they are a new person, because that is how it does me. After so long, I'm like can't we do some training? Can't we do something? I need something new."

Ilene also thought that training influenced practice by renewing the teachers when they experienced challenges in their classrooms and were unsure how to proceed. She explained:

> Sometimes I've tried everything that I know in my power to try and nothing is changing. So, of course you are going to get burned out if nothing changes and nothing goes the way you want it to. And so, I think that if I go to a training and they say, well, you can try this and it's just like, yes, thank you so much. Another week that the kids are entertained and learning something. You are actually doing what you are supposed to be doing. You are supposed to be teaching them.

Like Ilene, Francis found that training could re-energize teachers when they had difficulty or thought they were getting into a "rut". She said, "You need that every so often because you get, it's kind of like anything, you get in a rut. And if you get something new, you get excited, okay, let's get going." According to her, "You get that energy that you had when you first started."

To Lisa, training classes could also influence practice by providing a "reminder". She explained, "Sometimes I forget and I'll go back to the training hours, you know, the training class and then you know I'm kind of like, oh yeah, you are supposed to do it this

way or whatever." Doreen repeated the same idea when she said, "Sometimes you fall off track and it is just good to have a reminder".

Katz (1972) theorized that preschool teachers move through four stages in their professional development and within those stages the needs and concerns of the teachers vary based on their growth and developmental needs. According to Katz (1972), in the first stage, survival, teachers are concerned with learning their jobs and gaining acceptance from their colleagues. In the second stage, consolidation, teachers begin to focus on the needs of individual children and on finding solutions to problems experienced in the classroom. In the third stage, renewal, teachers often are searching for ways to maintain and sustain their enthusiasm. In the final stage, maturity, teachers begin to share their knowledge and expertise with others (Katz, 1977). While later study did not validate these stages (Katz, 1995), the ideas are often used in discussion of teachers' professional growth (e.g. Bloom, Sheerer, & Britz, 1991). The ways that the teachers in this study thought that training influenced their practice are reminiscent of the concerns of teachers in the stages identified by Katz (1972). In the survival and consolidation stages, teachers are trying to figure out how to do their jobs and moving toward solving identified problems within their classrooms. The teachers in this study, both new and experienced teachers, discussed the influence of training on their practice in terms of providing them with new ideas and techniques that could help them manage their classroom and enhance their curriculum. Further, many of the experienced teachers thought that training influenced their practice by providing them with a sense of renewal which mimics the third stage of "renewal" identified by Katz (1972). According to Katz, it is in this third stage, that teachers may become bored or feel less inspired. These

teachers talk explicitly about training providing them with a sense of renewal and re-energizing them for teaching.

Many of the teachers in this study thought that training influenced their practice in more general ways by getting the "spark going" through providing with new ideas and also providing a sense of renewal. In the next subtheme, I will explore how some of the teachers discussed the influence of training on practice in more complex ways.

***"That Training Has Always Stuck With Me"***

> *I went to one training and it was one of the best trainings because we had these jars that we were supposed to take things out of the jars. Well, I couldn't open my jar and I would try to talk to the teacher and she was always too busy and that was her whole point. That sometimes the teachers, we ourselves, are too busy and we will push the kid out. And that was what they were trying to tell us and turns out that that is very true. But, you know what? That training was about ten years ago [and] that training has always stuck with me. Yes, and because of that, I have always made a point since then to… my main goal now as a teacher is to listen and pay attention because they do have something to say. The children have something to say. I don't care if they are three, I don't care if they are four. They do have something to say. (Eve)*

In the above quote, Eve is giving an example of a training class that made a serious impact on her understanding of children and her role as a teacher. She is recalling an experience that she thinks altered her consciousness and subsequently changed how she viewed children and her interactions with children. As she said, "That training has

always stuck with me". In this case, the training was incidental. Eve did not indicate that she had been having difficulties in the area of listening to children previously, but the experience in the class caused her to realize that this was something she needed to pay attention to. It spoke to her at a deeper level. In the previous subtheme, I explored the ways in which these teachers think that their training experiences influence their practice in more general ways, now I will look how some of these teachers described deeper understandings of the ways that training influences their practice. The teachers who spoke of training influencing their practice in this way were typically the more experienced teachers and there were only a few such examples within the data. First, I will explore examples in which these teachers think that training has influenced their practice in terms of altering their understanding about children's behavior. Then, I will look at an example in which a teacher identified a specific training need and purposefully chose a class in which she might learn more about the issue which, in turn, altered some of her practices. In both cases, these teachers reported a more complex understanding of the ways in which training has influenced what they do in their classrooms and their interactions with children and families.

Both Doreen and Beth both spoke of training experiences that they thought influenced their practice in terms of furthering their understanding of children's behavior. Doreen gave the following example of a training class she had attended and how she thinks it altered her understandings of children:

> I deal with, the majority of my class is boys. And I have a couple of children in there who have this ODD, obsessive disobedience disorder, and I went to a training where this women discussed the make-up of a boy and how to deal with

> boys and, you know, dealing with ADD and all that kind of stuff. And it was huge for me to come in and try some of these ideas for boys. Because that is a stressful day to have a lot of boys anyways, because boys are very rambunctious. I feel pretty sure no four year old boy doesn't have, in my eyes, ADD. They're all ADD. So, for a parent to come in and, well, my son has this or this. I believe so highly against diagnosing these boys with all these things. They are just four. Even girls at that age, they are all hyper. Especially after three days of rain and they can't go outside. All children have ADD.

On the surface, Doreen appears to be doing what she is saying that she is against, "diagnosing" children, particularly boys, with behavior disorders. Under the surface, however, is the seems to be the beginning of a deeper understanding that many children, boys and girls, may exhibit "rambunctious" and "hyper" behavior. She seems to be questioning "diagnosing" children and suggesting that some of behaviors that others are seeing as problematic may just be age-related. She thought that this particular training experience influenced her practice in terms of expanding her understandings of children's behavior.

Beth did not give a specific example of a particular class that she thought affected her understandings of how to interact with children and guide their behavior, but thought that, as a whole, her training classes about redirecting children's behavior had influenced her thinking and given her tools for more appropriate practices in this area. She said, "I think the redirecting ones that I have taken have helped a lot because growing up it was the belt and it was like, we don't do that here and you can't do that here and it has helped a lot being able to redirect the children". Before attending training classes on

"redirecting", her knowledge of guiding children's behavior was based on her previous life experiences that involved physical discipline. Through her training classes, she learned alternative methods she could use in the classroom. She explained: "They've given us a lot of good ideas on how to redirect them or how to give them another thing. It makes my class go a lot smoother. Those have been my favorite. Because they are kids, they are going to act up."

Francis was one of the few teachers who spoke of purposefully attending training based on a self-identified training need. She explained, "I took a class on being able to…I was having a problem with parents. So, I took a class about communication." As a result of this class, she changed some of her practices. She said, "I put up my bulletin board and I've started communication and making my daily sheets more positive." In the class she learned specific techniques, such as adding a parent bulletin board to her classroom, and also was given guidance for interacting with parents both verbally and in written forms such as newsletter and notes. She explained, "They were saying, you know, don't put anything negative in them. Be more positive." As a result, she thinks that her relationships with parents have improved. She said, "Me and the parents are getting along a little bit better. I'm able to talk to them. So, that was a really interesting class." In this example, Francis was able to provide a clear connection of how a specific training class altered her practice.

In this subtheme, I have explored the teachers' descriptions of their understanding of the way in which some of their training classes have influenced their practice by altering both their actual practices and their thinking about practice.

For these teachers, training is seen as something that can "make things better" and influence their practice both in more general and more complex ways. For many, participation in training classes "get the spark going" providing new ideas to try in the classroom and providing them with a sense of renewal. Others are able to articulate specific training that they had influenced their practice and their understanding of children's behavior.

The teachers in this study thought that training had an influence on their teaching and the nature of the experiences they provided for children. In this next them, I explore the teachers' understanding of the relationship between training and providing quality care to the children in their centers.

## "TO HAVE QUALITY CHILD CARE, YOU DO NEED TRAINING": THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAINING AND QUALITY

> *And I think that in order to have quality child care, you do need some trainings, at least, [to] point you in the right direction. I mean, what they expect of you? I've seen so many teachers that don't even know what the state laws are. And it just drives me nuts. How can you work in day care and not even know? And then I go, what's your ratio? I don't know. How can you not know what your ratio is? Or how could you not know, and they do change it every couple of years, so sometimes I'm not even right, but how could you not know what the law is about a kid vomiting? Or how can you not know what the law is about a kid's temperature? I mean, this is what you are doing. How do you know what you are doing if you haven't been told? (Mary)*

According to these teachers, one of the ways in which training "can only make things better" is by contributing to the skill levels and knowledge of the teachers and, in turn, increasing the quality of their centers. During the first interview with each of these teachers, I began a discussion on the topic of the relationship between quality and training by asking if they saw a relationship between training and providing quality child care. Nearly all of the teachers (17 of 18) answered affirmatively. The next question asked them to elaborate their understanding of how training affected the quality of care at their centers. In this theme, I will explore the teachers' practical discourse on the influence of training on quality which includes the idea that training promotes better teaching practices which increases the quality level of the center.

***"It's the Teachers That Bring Quality to a Center"***

For many of these teachers, the teacher is dominant in their discussions of the impact of training on quality and they thought, as Lisa very clearly stated, that "it's the teachers that bring quality to a center". She explained further:

> You'll hear that from parents a million times over. Because there are plenty of parents here who have the finances to take their child to a child care center that charges twice as much but the quality of the children's lives in the building is different. It's a very close relationship with parents and children here, and I think that has everything to do with training.

This idea of training being an important factor in quality was also seen in Kim's explanation of the relationship. She said that training enabled teachers to "deal with things differently" which causes "the quality to be higher or lower". She explained:

> If you are not trained on how to deal with some of the issues that we have around here, you are going to go about it in the way of a natural person, to yell and to get angry, and if you are not trained differently, that does lower the quality of the center. If you have a parent come in every day and hears this one teacher screaming at her children because she is not trained on how to deal with this specific type of child, then that lowers the quality in my eyes.

Like Kim, Gin thinks that training is an important element of quality that is easily recognized in the actions of the teachers. She said:

> You can tell when you walk in. Some things, if people aren't trained, they don't even know what they aren't allowed to do… you can always tell between the ones that were just thrown in and not really given any instruction and the ones that have a little bit of book training and hands-on training. I really, truly think you can. I can. As a parent, I've looked for day care other than where I've worked and I can totally tell you who has any training and who uses the training they've had, and either who hasn't had it or doesn't use it at all. Nine times out of ten, I can tell you.

For these teachers, training provides an opportunity to learn appropriate practices and become better teachers. Since they associate better teachers with higher quality, training is seen as an avenue to higher quality. As Francis said, "You need to get good training to have a good program going on. I mean, you can't go in there and expect it to run right and not know what you're doing." Olga also included the idea that training helps teachers know what to do, thereby increasing quality. She explained:

> I think that when you have well-trained teachers, the quality of your center automatically goes up because they know what they are doing better. You know, they are not just kind of out there on their own doing whatever they think is right. There is a definite relationship between the two of them.

Quinn was another teacher who thought that "when the program is well-explained to you and you comprehend it" that you are better "able to visualize the whole program". She added, "There is a lot of things that teachers don't know that they can learn from trainings and stuff like that and take it back with them." She thought that this helps "them to be better teachers and better with the children."

While Penny also saw training as important for quality, she was also concerned about the quality of the training itself. She thinks this relationship "depends on what kind of training and how good the training is." She elaborated: "I think you could have hours and hours of training and it may not do you any good because you may not be able to relate it to what you are doing."

Nearly all of the teachers in this study see a relationship between training and quality. In their view, when teachers receive appropriate training and learn about appropriate practices, quality is increased. In this next section, I explore the teachers' perceptions about the relationship between training and another important issue in the field: teacher turnover.

## "EVEN WITH ALL THE TRAINING IN THE WORLD…THERE WILL BE TURNOVER": THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAINING AND TEACHER TURNOVER

> *A lot of what you deal with is people getting to the point of where they break and leave. And I think do it is connected to training because if you are trained properly, you are trained how to make it through the day. You are trained how to deal with these children that push your buttons. Three year olds, that is their funnest thing in life, is to push the teachers' buttons or their parents' buttons. And if they are trained on that, it is not going leave as much option in the day for you to break ten times. You know? And I think that would help a lot. There still would be turnover. It's still going to be women and younger women who are going to school or getting married or moving away, so there is still turnover. Even with all the training in the world, it is still a profession where there will be turnover. (Mary)*

Turnover is a fact of life in most child care centers (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Just mentioning this subject during my interviews with the teachers often led to bodily reactions- heavy sighs, eye rolling, grimaces. High rates of turnover not only present challenges in the form of disruptions to children and teachers, they are also associated with lower levels of quality service for children (e.g. Helburn, 1995; Whitebook et al., 1989). When I first asked these teachers if they thought there was a relationship between training and turnover, nearly two-thirds said no. For these teachers, turnover was thought to be more about hiring the wrong people than training. However, when asked if they thought "better, more or different" training might help with turnover, nearly all did think that training might help, but within this discussion was consideration that as Kim put it,

"training will only help those who want to be helped". For the other third of the teachers who did initially claim to see a relationship between training and turnover, the general consensus was that minimal preservice and inservice training opportunities contributed to problem of teacher turnover. In this theme, "Even with all the training in the world…there will be turnover", I will explore the teachers' understanding of the relationship between training and turnover through three subthemes. In the first, "It Goes Back to Hiring", I will explore the initial response by the majority of these teachers who felt there was not a connection between the two, but that hiring issues are the primary cause of teacher turnover. In the second subtheme, "Not Enough Training", I will explore the responses of the teachers who did think there was a connection. In the final subtheme, "Training Might Help [Reduce] Turnover", I will explore how ultimately the majority of the teachers in this study did think that training might help with this issue.

***"It Goes Back to Hiring"***

> *It goes back to hiring, who you hire. It really does. It really does boil down to who you hire. I'm one that sees that anybody can come in and fool you on an application, on a piece of paper, anybody can come in and give you the right words you want to hear for your interview. (Anna)*

Like Anna, many of these teachers thought that turnover was highly related to hiring the wrong people for the job. Their initial response to questions about the relationship between the two was to say that they did not think the two were related and the training was really about who was hired. The primary reasons given by these teachers as to the cause of teacher turnover were that prospective teachers "did not know what

they were getting into" and some were simply not right for the job. Other variables mentioned were the dynamics of the center, the age of the applicant and whether or not the applicant had children of their own.

When I asked Francis if she thought that turnover was related to training, she said, "No, I think that is something completely different. I just think that there is a lot of people that this is not what they are cut out to be." Helen said, "I sometimes think they are not sure about what they are getting into." Because of this, according to her, many just get "overwhelmed by the kids, you know, the troublemakers and it's kind of frustrating to them". Joyce also thought that "people come here and they don't realize what they are getting into. They think it is just going to be easy to watch a few kids and they find out it is not like that." Nita summed it all up:

> People get into child care because they think we play with kids all day and it is not a hard job. And it is probably one of the most difficult jobs I've ever had. But, for the most part, people think that in child care we don't do anything.

Another factor listed by some of these teachers as to why turnover is high is the specific dynamics of the center. Randy said, "I think that, personally, I know a lot of the turnover here has been personal relationships here at work as far as coworker to coworker." Mary also thought that the fact that there is "a lot of women working in one building" led to "cattiness and things like that".

Age was also seen an issue in turnover. Randy said that the director at her center sometimes hired "young teen-age girls who can't handle kids". She said, "You put 15 three year olds in one room with an 18 year old teacher and then you wonder?" To her, it was obvious that the turnover in situations like this was related to age. Francis also

thought that age was a factor. She explained, "A lot of them, like the young girls coming in, just don't know what they are doing. They are thinking, oh, this is an easy job for the summer". Cara was another teacher concerned about the age of the teachers being hired and connected this to whether or not they have children of their own. She explained:

> Depending on how young the person is, how mature they are. That makes a difference on the turnover. The younger ones, I think, that don't have any children do need the training because they don't have any idea. And they just can't deal with the stress or, you know, having to take care of the kids. Um… but, me, like now that I'm more mature at 40 years old, I can take care of the kids.

Whether or not a prospective teacher had children of their own was thought to have connections to teacher turnover in both directions. For Doreen, just being a parent did not qualify the person to teach in child care. She explained, "Where you know, you might have two kids of your own, but you're going to have a dozen or 18 yelling your name out…" Penny was of the opposite opinion about parenthood's contribution to turnover. As she said, "If I didn't already have a kid, I probably would have freaked out. And most people, the ones that don't stick around, are the ones that don't have kids."

In this subtheme, I have explored the understandings of the majority of the teachers that turnover is a complex issue that may be influenced by multiple factors. The initial response to questions about the relationship between training and turnover led to conversations about these multiple factors which the majority of these teachers classified as hiring the wrong people.

***"Not Enough Training"***

> *I think if they don't get the proper training they get frustrated and say that's it, I'm done. Because I've seen it. I've seen it. They didn't get enough training or they didn't get enough things that they needed at the time. (Beth)*

While the majority of the teachers initially responded that they did not see a connection between training and turnover, one third of the teachers did think that there was a relationship. For these teachers, the relationship between training and turnover identified was that new teachers did not receive enough training. Gina explained, "I think a lot leave because they don't have the training they need for the issues they have. Some training is very broad." Eve also thought that the teachers did not get the training they needed when hired. She said:

> Well, like I said, a lot of people get into it and they just can't… I know a lot of people that started and said, oh my god, what was I thinking? And maybe they didn't get as much training as they needed. I think the more training you have the more you are able to deal with it.

Olga related this issue to the type of training they received. She thought that "if there was more hands-on training, they would have a better understanding and wouldn't freak out and walk out". Helen also connected teacher turnover to a lack of preservice training. According to her, since many of the new teachers do not receive preservice training, they actually leave before they have a chance to receive any training. As she explained, "They may not be here long enough to take advantage of the training. I've seen the turnover. It's like a week or two and they are gone." She added that "maybe the frustration in the classroom" leads them to leave "before they want to learn what to do for

the classroom". She thinks that "if more training is done in the centers" that turnover might not be as high.

The teachers in this study who initially responded to questions about the relationship between training and turnover that they saw a connection, thought that this connection was about new teachers not receiving enough training. Specifically, concern was expressed that due to a lack of preservice training, many new teachers did not stay long enough to have the benefit of participating in any training classes.

***"Training Might Help [Reduce] Turnover"***

> *I don't think that the trainings have anything to do with turnover. I mean, it may play a small part. I take that back, I think that it may play a small part, but I think a big part is the already made staff that is here and the group of kids that they walk into. (Randy)*

Randy was not unique among these teachers in her understanding of the role training may or may not play in the issue of turnover. Many of these teachers initially downplayed the role of training in relation to turnover, but then, as they continued to speak, seemed to come to the conclusion that training might help.

Mary thought that better training opportunities might help the situation. According to her, "I think that there would still be plenty of turnover, but I don't think it would be as grand. And I think that the reason for turnover would be less harsh." Gina also thought that training might help. She said, "I think that would keep them from running. I think that a lot of it isn't that they can't do it, that either they don't know how or they are overwhelmed because they haven't been taught the right way."

The teachers who initially said that they did think training and turnover were related also explained how they thought training helps teachers and might lower turnover rates. Nita said, "There has been people at the other center that I worked at and here that start out really stumbling and then the more that they do, the more training they get, the better they get." Olga also explained how she sees the relationship:

> I think, I think that, especially when you have a teacher that comes in that is brand-new that has never actually worked in child care, I think if they got better training initially before they were just thrown into the classroom, I think there wouldn't be as much turnover because they would feel better prepared walking into that classroom and knowing what to expect.

Many of the teachers in this study spoke about the issue of teacher turnover, both directly, when asked specific questions about the topic, and indirectly, as the issue influenced other topics of conversation. Nearly all of the teachers reported having been affected by this issue and many expressed frustration at the havoc turnover causes at their centers. In this theme, I have explored this topics through three subthemes that illuminate their complex nature of this topic. First, I discussed the teachers' descriptions of the multiple factors they reported as possible causes for turnover in light their initial negative responses about the relationship in the subtheme, "It Goes Back to Hiring". Next, in the subtheme, "Not Enough Training", I explored the ways that the teachers who responded affirmatively to questions about the relationship between training and turnover thought the primary factor was the lack of sufficient training opportunities. Finally, in the subtheme, "Training Might Help [Reduce] Turnover", I included discussions from the

majority of the teachers who, either initially or with further discussion, did think that training might help with this challenging issue.

## "IT VARIES FROM PERSON TO PERSON": TEACHERS' ATTITUDES ABOUT TRAINING AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ATTITUDES OF OTHERS

> *I think it varies from person to person. I mean, of course, there is going to be people that are like, I don't need any training. I've been here for blah, blah, blah, and I know what to do. And I think they do need training. I think they need training not to be so stuck up. I think there has to be new things that they don't know. (Ilene)*

In this study, while many of the teachers had plenty to say about various aspects of their training experiences, none indicated that they had negative attitudes toward training in general. In fact, many of these teachers spoke very positively of their training experiences. However, they do not think that everyone sees training this same way. In talking about their own understandings of training, they often contrast their positive attitude to what they perceive as negative attitudes toward training from some of their peers and administrators. In this theme, "It Varies From Person to Person", I will explore the teachers' attitudes toward training and their perceptions about the attitudes of their coworkers. First, I will look at the teachers' attitudes toward training and how they contrast their positive attitudes towards training with the varying attitudes of their peers. Next, I will explore the teachers' perceptions of the variation in their administrators' attitudes toward training.

***Teachers' Attitudes toward Training***

Nearly all of the teachers in this study spoke positively of training and, as discussed above, think that training is important for many different reasons. More than half of these teachers said they always try to get more than the state-mandated 15 clock hours of training. This was especially true for the more experienced teachers who reported consistently getting more annual clock hours than was required. For a couple of the teachers, like Kim, this motivation also led them to pursue their CDA. She said that she always tries to "go that extra mile" and illustrated this point when she said:

> I feel if the teachers are willing and look to get that extra training and go that extra mile, that it does come out in their work as a teacher because they are actually there to do a job and make a difference in what they are doing.

Anna also pursued additional training hours. She said, "I always try to get the most I can." This motivation for further training led Anna to pay for an extensive training class conducted by "licensing" that consisted of 460 clock hours. She says, "I did it on my own…I paid for it out of my pocket because I did not ask to get approval." She believed that it would help her in her classroom. When talking about her training, she says, "I feel that it is not their [corporation] responsibility, it's mine".

When asked if she typically received the 15 clock hours per year, Quinn said, "I usually do more…I think that it is very important for us to take more classes because you don't know what your trials and tribulations are going to be."

Many of these teachers make comparisons between themselves and other teachers who they do not see as "going the extra mile". As Nita said, "Most people are just, I need my 15 hours so what classes can I take that are free".

One of the ways this lack of motivation is seen is when they do not use the information presented in the classes. Helen explained:

> It's very important. I think a lot of times people that go to the training do not bring back and implement what they learned. And I don't know why that is exactly because I personally have seen different projects and things that I think would be great for a certain age group and it just hasn't been done. Maybe they don't feel it is important. But, I don't know why that is that they just don't tend to do it.

Beth also talks at length about her desire for and pursuit of further training, but believes that this is not true for everyone. She explained:

> I think it is very important that you do more than what you're required because it helps you in the long run. I know there is people out there that just do what they want to do to get by but not me. I want to know new stuff. Whatever comes out new I want to know about it…That's my personal thing and the reason why I'm in it is because I want to help mold the children for tomorrow. And I think that is really important because these parents work and they really want their children to learn but they don't have the time for it. I think there needs to be quality of the person in there that wants to help that child because there is so many things going on in this world today that [pause] terrible.

Kim also sees teachers that are not motivated in training classes. She described a training seminar that she attended that included a take-home portion. She described the bookwork as "very interesting, if you took the time to read it" but says that "some people did not. I know they didn't. They copied mine and then sent the test in."

Theilheimer's (1998) study on the perspectives of student teachers in an early childhood vocational program also pointed to the how the attitudes of some her participants seemed to have an influence on others in the classroom. She connected students' interest or disinterest in class with the students' feelings of ownership of their time. As the students in her study gained experiences teaching through their practicum experiences and had more 'lived experiences' to share, their sense of ownership in the class seemed to increase. The child care teachers in this study, particularly the ones with higher levels of experience, express positive attitudes toward training and seem to have a sense of ownership concerning their own training, for example, when Anna insists that her training is her "responsibility" and not the center's or when Beth discusses her desire to participate in training because she "wants to know new stuff".

For Ilene, the negative attitude about training that she reported from coworkers also had an impact on her own feelings about training. She explained, "A lot lately I have been feeling like, oh, I have to go to training, so it's kind of like, because it is mandatory, some people I've noticed have viewed it sort of as an inconvenience." While she said that she is sure that "they can see that they get something out of the training", she does not "think that people are like, 'Yea! There is a training this weekend! We get to go and learn new things.'". Instead, she thought that "experienced staff" were more likely to say, "I've got to go to another one. And I got to get more hours again for this year". According to her:

> There's an infinite amount of learning that you can do, but a lot of trainings, from what I've heard, not from what I've experienced, have been repetitious. Like, oh, I already did that one three years ago, but I need my hours so I'm going to go to it

again. And so, I feel, I mean, the trainings obviously get a little rusty. So, I'm sure there are little things you can ferret out, but I think they just become more of an inconvenience because, from what I've heard, there is nothing, like they are new, but they say sort of the same thing.

While she reported that she had never experienced this herself, it seems to be having an affect on how she is thinking about training. According to Billet (1999), "dominant values of the workplace are likely to be influential", particularly for new people because "novices will feel the need to comply" (p.157). Ilene reported that she had participated in approximately 25 clock hours of training in her 18 months as a teacher. Being relatively new, the attitudes of others about training can have an influence her attitude.

***Perceptions about Administrators' Attitudes toward Training***

While the teachers in this study reported being attuned to variations in the attitudes about training of other teachers in their centers, they also reported seeing variation in their administrators' attitudes towards training. Many spoke of working in centers where they thought the administrators' attitude toward training was focused more on ensuring that teachers received the required amount of state-mandated clock hours of training than thinking about the training needs of the teachers and how they might benefit from their training experiences.

According to Sheerer & Bauer (1996), it is not uncommon for directors to come into a supervisory role without specialized training, and yet "they are called on to develop, train, evaluate, and appraise, child care workers on a daily basis" (p. 201). This

is problematic as the director is the one who sets the tone for center and guides the quality (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992). As the manager of the workplace, the messages they send about the value and importance of training and have an influence on how their staff perceives the value of training opportunities as well as an important role in motivating staff for participation in training (Tracey, Hinkin, Tannebaum, and Mathiew, 2001). Kirkpatrick (1998) identifies five "climates" that impact staff responses to training-preventing, discouraging, neutral, encouraging, and requiring" (p.21). In child care centers, directors set the climate and teachers pick up cues from the value of training through personal and group interactions.

When asked about administrative support for training, many of these teachers found variations in when what they saw as the director's attitude. Nita said that her current center "is the first center that I feel like they know it would benefit the center for me to be better educated". This was a change from past centers. As she said, "All the other centers were just like, as long as you get your 15 hours, then I don't care". Francis also had worked at centers where she thought that the director's attitude focused more on getting the hours than what the teachers were learning. She explained:

> I think some of them, like directors, have an attitude like you've got to get these hours instead of like, hey, let's learn something. So, you know, it just depends. Like our director is great. She's like, hey, what are we learning? Oh, I'm taking this class, cool, tell me about it. So, I think they need to be more supportive but not pushing.

Doreen also thought that many times the director's attitude toward training was "just to get your hours, it doesn't matter what it is" as opposed to pursuing training

opportunities from identified needs. When asked if she thought the director's attitude towards training was important, she replied:

> Oh, yes. Big time. Because if you have someone as the director or assistant director or the owner that doesn't care about what kind of training you get, I mean, it just wouldn't be the same thing. Everyone is going to be like it doesn't matter anyways. I just want to get my hours. So, if you actually go to something that you can bring back and use, it makes a big difference. Otherwise, it doesn't do you any good.

According to Penny, "preparation needs to be handled a little bit better, too". She gave an example of finding out that she was supposed to attend a night-time training class at the corporate center where she works the day before it was to be held. She said, "You are going a thousand miles an hour and they throw something on somebody and say, hey, tomorrow, we've got this." Since she needed to make other arrangements for the care of her own child while she attended the training session, this lack of notice was very frustrating to her. She continued, "It's really hard. And then if you get in trouble for it, and I'm like, you didn't tell me until yesterday. I usually always find ways to make it, but I think preparation could be better."

When Kim was asked if she thought her administrators had been supportive of training, she said:

> Supportive? No. Basically, it was you have to have this because. It wasn't because I want you to have it or I think you need this part of this training, it's because your 15 hours is coming up and you don't have them. But, actually getting encouraged to go to certain training? Never happens.

Mary thought there was an absence of administrative support for training in her center was due to director turnover. She reported four directors in two years at the same center. She explained:

> The director turnover, the administrator turnover, is so high in this field. And until recently, no, there has not been a lot of push towards training. The director and I now are fairly close and I actually am hoping that now more so. Before, it was never a concern. I don't think… it was more of getting through the day rather than let's plan on training.

For Anna, she thought the absence of administrative support for training at one of the centers she had worked for in the past was due to a lack of education in the administrators themselves. She thought them to be "stuck" and "limited" because "they had never gotten any education". According to her, they "just decided to open one [child care center] up and let's run it".

When Beth was asked about her experiences in terms of administrative support for training, she indicated differences between program types. She explained:

> I think it is the directors didn't care. I think the directors were there just to run the building and I don't think they care about different things. Now, in the corporate world, it's different. The corporate, I think, the directors are more worried about consistency. They want to teach them things. But in the mom and pop, it was different.

Many of the teachers in this study thought the director's attitude toward training was important and many had examples of what the saw as negative or disinterested responses to the professional development needs of teachers. While some did say that

felt their directors were supportive and encouraging, many thought that the directors were too busy "running" the center to focus on training.

In this theme, "It Varies From Person to Person", I have explored the teachers' attitudes toward training and their perceptions about the attitudes of other teachers and their administrators. None of the teachers in this study reported having a negative attitude about training themselves, but many of them discussed what they saw as negative attitudes others.

For the teachers in this study, training is seen as important. Throughout the interviews sessions, teachers frequently talked about their ideas for how training could be better and what child care teachers need from training experiences to be successful. In the final section of this chapter, I explore the teachers' ideas for both preservice and inservice training.

## "EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN": CHLD CARE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

> *I would include everything under the sun from parent relations to the biting to the potty training to curriculum to transitions. All that stuff that is required in one classroom because you never know. You might be kicked into another classroom. (Beth)*

When asked about their ideas for training, the teachers in this study had much to say. In this section, I will explore seven themes that were found within the transcript data concerning the teachers' ideas about their training based on their perceptions of "needs". First, these teachers identified a "Need for Basic Preservice Training" in which new teachers would be given information about basic caregiving as well as further

information about how to be a teacher in their classroom. Second, these teachers thought that there is a "Need for Preservice Opportunities to Observe Master Teachers", either the teacher they are replacing or a more experienced teacher within the center. Third, many of these teachers saw a "Need for Individualized Training" that focused on their unique training needs. Fourth, these teachers identified a "Need for Training Based on Administrator's Evaluations" in which administrators would take a more active role observing in classrooms and provide training based on the assessed needs. Fifth, many of these teachers thought that there is an overwhelming "Need for Training on Specific Age Groups" to provide teachers with greater understanding of the developmental levels and needs of the children in their classroom. Sixth, several of these teachers discussed what they saw as a "Need for Something Different" in terms of training topics and delivery of training. Finally, the most pervasive need identified by these teachers was the "Need for More Training" both preservice and inservice.

**Need for Basic Pre-Service Training Classes**

> *I think maybe even before somebody is hired they might have a training session with the new person and certain things [should be] covered. They shouldn't just get shoved in a classroom. Just going over requirements of the class or what the different procedures are [that] we follow with the classroom activities. Just letting them know more about what's available. And I don't think that has been done, where the new person has a lot of time to know what is going on and what's expected in the classroom. The main thing is for training for people right away. (Helen)*

According to these teachers, child care teachers need pre-service training that includes basic information and requirements about the expectations for teachers. The state standards in Texas includes pre-service training requirements, however, as discussed previously, none of the teachers in this study who should have received this training reported that they did. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the pre-service training requirements included in the state standards. To review, the seven content topics include developmental stages of children, age-appropriate activities, positive guidance and discipline, fostering children's self-esteem, supervision and safety practices, positive interaction with children, and preventing the spread of communicable diseases (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2006). The teachers' descriptions of the content they think should be covered in pre-service training contain many pieces of these components. In this theme, I will explore the teachers' descriptions of their ideas about pre-service training in terms of the content and format of training classes.

Just like Helen in the opening quote, Francis also sees a need for basic pre-service training. She thinks this training should include "all of the bases even how to change a diaper". She gave an example of an experience she had with a new teacher. She said, "I've had a girl come in and all the kid's diapers were backwards. She didn't know how to change a diaper." She found it very frustrating that someone would not know how to perform a task that she felt was so basic. As she said, "it is going to take more training" to get some of the teachers ready to work in a classroom and she thinks that pre-service training needs to be very explicit about basic caregiving skills including "how to clean the kid, how to get the kids to wash their hands, you know, just that basic". Ilene also spoke of the need for basic information such as explanations or "scenarios that a person, a

teacher, in this field will go through, you know, during the day". She continued, "Just little tiny basic things, just start to guide them...a little bit of guidance, a little help and helpful hints, some warnings, if you will".

Mary was more explicit in the content that she thought should be included in pre-service training. According to her, the "basic foundations" should include "your lesson planning, your classroom set-up, your daily schedule, all those things…a basic discipline system to start out". Anna also had specific recommendations for the content. She included "teaching them to be on a structure, a routine, for the kids…proper ways of handling children's discipline, the way your room should be flowing for your classroom, activities, maybe communication with your parents".

Like Anna, several of the teachers mentioned "parent communication" as a topic that they think should be included in preservice training; however, the state standards do not list that topic in the preservice requirements. This was a content area mentioned by these teachers that did not seem to fit easily into one of the required categories.

In addition to the content of the preservice training, several of these teachers also discussed the format. Kim talked at length about the pre-service training needs of teachers who are new to the field and was disturbed by the self-study pre-service training she had witnessed at her center. In her opinion, this type of training format was not going to be effective for beginners. She explained:

> If they had an actual training they could actually go to…beginners that have never done this before, that would give them a little bit of insight of this and that and the other before they actually start. Have some people there that actually have

> experience that can say you're going to have this child and they are going to bite and this is going to happen and this is going to happen to kind of preview them.

She felt that an "actual training" class with an instructor who had experience in the field would be more beneficial to new teachers. Nita also felt frustrated with the current situation at her center in which new teachers were not receiving, in her eyes, adequate pre-service training. Her frustration was compounded by having her own three year old child at the center with teachers that she thought had not received pre-service training on the "curriculum and stuff". She said:

> She has gone through so many different teachers and she's learned a lot, but, I mean, she's a very intelligent child, so I don't know if she learned it from the teachers or in spite of the teachers. It frustrates me because there is so much that she could be learning, but a lot of the teachers don't, but a lot of them don't know how to work with a child on an individual level.

Two main points were revealed in the teachers' discussion about their ideas for the content and format of preservice training classes for child care teachers. First, there is a general consensus that preservice training should include basic knowledge about how to care for children and as more detail about life in the classroom such as information about schedules, guidance, and curriculum. Second, several of these teachers thought that preservice training in the form of a self-study was not an effective format and that it should be available in the form of an "actual" class.

**Need for Pre-service Opportunities to Observe Teachers**

> *I would have them come in and train with one of the best teachers in the whole building. So that they can get down curriculum, kind of know the flow of the classroom, stuff like that. I wouldn't stick them just in a classroom. Maybe for a week to two weeks depending on the individual person to see how far along they get and to feel what they are learning from that teacher. (Beth)*

A common theme within the teachers' discussions about the preservice needs of child care teachers was the understanding that opportunity to observe other teachers is an important avenue for learning on the job. As discussed earlier in this chapter, these teachers spoke about finding their own teachers to observe and that they saw those experiences as a major factor in their learning how to be a teacher. Most teacher certification programs include components for observing other teachers and opportunity for student teaching. Likewise early childhood professional organizations include this type of educational experience in their guidelines and recommendations for early childhood teacher preparation programs. ACEI states clearly that "early childhood teachers should have well-planned laboratory experiences under the supervision of experienced and qualified teachers" (ACEI, website). Unlike state teacher certification requirements, state regulations for child care center teachers make no such requirements. While the teachers in this study think that observation of other teachers would be an asset to their learning about how to be a teacher, they also point the difficulties they see with enacting such a concept.

In this theme, I will explore the teachers ideas about preservice training that includes the opportunity to observe other teachers including their ideas about observing

"current" teachers or experienced teachers as well as what they describe as the barriers to enacting this type of preservice experience.

***Opportunity to Observe Current Teacher***

While many of the teachers in this study thought that new teachers should have the opportunity to observe a master teacher before they began in their own classroom, several of the teachers thought that they should have the opportunity to observe the teacher they would be replacing. Although they recognized that this would not always be possible, they thought it would be very helpful when it was.

Randy said that she thought pre-service training should be "split up" between "going through the handbook and stuff, handwashing, blah, blah, blah" and going "out to different classrooms". She saw this as a form of "on-the-job training". She thought that they could be sent to a "teacher that has been there over the years" or, when possible, "the teacher that was leaving". She explained:

> Because I know that when we get new teachers here, it's like, ding, this is your classroom. You know, they know no names and, you know, there is so many small details to every individual child and if you don't know them… You know, there could be a certain, special way to get them to calm down or something that you need to do at a certain time or somebody else might have bathroom issues. And if you are new, you aren't going to let somebody go to the bathroom every two minutes. You know, it's just, little things like that.

For her, the opportunity to work with the current teacher would be a way of learning about the children and classroom without going in "blind". She felt that a week

or two would be a sufficient amount of time. Gina, however, felt that a couple of days with the current teacher would be adequate. She explained:

> I think a teacher should work with, in a perfect world, the teacher that's leaving for two or three days. To see how those kids are, to see how they handle, to see how you would do things different, see what works and doesn't work.

At was her opinion that observation of the current teacher would also serve another purpose. Not only would the teacher obtain information about the children, she would also have the opportunity to see if she was "right" for the classroom. As she explained, "It would be, you come in, and they do it somewhat like this here, you get to go in and try out in that classroom and see if you mesh with that age group. If you don't, well, then you don't want a teacher who is going to be miserable".

For these teachers, opportunities to observe the teacher they would be replacing were seen as mode for learning about the intimate details of the children and the classroom for which they had been hired. It was a common lament that new teachers often walk into their new classroom with little information about the children who would become their responsibility.

***Opportunity to Observe an Experienced Teacher***

Most of the teachers who talked about providing pre-service opportunities to observe another teacher did not think that new teacher should observe the teacher who was leaving, but that they should observe an experienced teacher. As Anna said, "It's important to have another teacher who has had more experience around the center to teach them the ropes". Kim also thought that when "they come in with no training or

experience at all in child care", they should not be "alone or thrown in a classroom all by themselves their first day or their first week". Instead, she thought they should have the opportunity to observe or work alongside "an experienced teacher that would be a good role model for them".

Doreen thought that pre-service should include observation, classwork, and then working with another teacher. She thought this would help new teachers get started and also possibly reduce turnover if the teacher found she was unable to do the job. She explained:

> I think if they went out and actually maybe sat in a classroom and watched it for a while, you know, with someone who has been doing it for while and then actually taking a few different classes that actually touch on different parts of what goes on. And then actually go back and work with someone just for the day or for as long as they need. A few days or whatever, to see if they can actually handle it.

Nita's ideas for pre-service included watching and participating in a functioning classroom. She said:

> I mean, for me it would be a good thing to have an observation window where you are not in the classroom and the kids don't see you, you are watching and somebody is there to tell you, see how they are doing it. But it should also be in the classroom. I don't think they work with another teacher long enough. You know, a week, two weeks. It really depends on the person.

Ilene thought that the opportunity to work in the classroom alongside a more experienced teacher who could provide feedback to the new teachers would be ideal. She explained:

> Just because working side by side, there are things that I do that didn't work, that I could have handled better, they weren't necessarily bad but, they could have been done a little more efficiently. And I would have never known that I was doing, that there was some easier way to go about it. And, so she would stop me and say, that was really good but this is a lot easier and she'd show me that and I'd say, oh, yeah. So, I think definitely to work with someone side by side so that they see you and can help you.

According to her, new teachers have to start in the classroom because they are needed to "balance out the ratio and take care of the kids in the classroom", but this can provide an opportunity for the new teacher to learn from the teacher they are assisting, as she said, "sort of like a shadow". She explained further:

> It would be showing them. Like shadow me a little bit, watch what I do and explain to them as you go. You know, like now we are going to set out their lunch, I need you to set out nap, I'm going to serve lunch and tomorrow we'll switch so that you know how to do both and I know how to do both. Just sort of like a shadow.

While many of these teachers thought that new teachers should have an opportunity to observe a more experienced teacher, several thought that would be difficult to provide. Eve thought this was ideal, but qualified her statement with "if you *have* a more experienced teacher" [her emphasis]. Mary also suggested new teachers should have the opportunity to observe, but said that, "Most of the year, there is really not well-moving classrooms for that option to be there because we are so chaotic." She explained further:

> We've been short-staffed for employees in this building. That means you've got teachers who by Thursday have already worked 50 hours, so unfortunately for us who try very hard throughout the day, there is still times when my classroom looks like I'm a new teacher and I've never been around kids because sometimes you can't do an art project with 25 children. And a teacher who knows nothing is standing there just watching for numbers. So, if everything was possible and I had the power, yes, to walk into a classroom that had your assistant teachers and your lead teachers, you know, a large enough room with the financial backing where you had all these things. You walk into classrooms in this building and they have nothing. There is hardly any toys and hardly any sensory stuff. It's not always an ideal classroom where the teacher has the training and it all moves very smoothly. Here, everyday is a new day. You won't know if you have to nap the kids together, you won't know who is combining with each other, you won't know if I'm going to have 12 kids from the class below me while mine are bumped up. That's what hard. It's because you have such a new day everyday and you never know what's going to hit you working in day care.

For these teachers, opportunity to observe a master or experienced teacher was seen as an "ideal" mode of preservice training. They thought that it would provide valuable information about learning how to be a teacher, particularly if they were able to work side-by-side with this teacher and receive feedback.

In this theme, I have discussed the teachers' ideas about preservice experiences that include opportunities to observe other teachers. While some of the teachers felt that observing the current teacher, when possible, others felt that it was more important for

new teachers to observe the experienced or "master" teachers. Recognition that enactment of this form of preservice training experience would be difficult to implement was mentioned by several of the teachers. First, several teachers thought that, in some cases, it would be difficult to find a good role model within their center for new teachers to observe. Second, there was understanding that staffing situations could hamper implementation in two ways. First, staffing shortages would often lead to situations in which new teachers are needed immediately to fulfill state child/staff ratio requirements. Second, due to staffing shortages, experienced teachers would not be able to adequately model appropriate practices for new teachers as they themselves dealt with the challenges of the day which might include "combining" classes and altering their normal routines.

**Need for Individualized Training**

> *It all depends on what you need. I think it is individualized, you know, because everybody's different. You know, someone may be really great in this, but not in this. So, this would be something they need to train in. Where this, they don't. (Francis)*

Francis shared a concern that many of these teachers expressed when she thought that training needed to be individualized. None of the teachers in this study reported individualized training plans based on their own unique needs. Instead, as discussed earlier in this chapter, they chose classes from what was available or else were told by their director that they had to attend specific trainings held at their center. While they could choose classes they felt would be helpful to them, this was not described as a purposeful plan based on assessment of their needs. In this theme, I will explore how

these teachers discussed individualized training in terms of the need for training that addressed their own unique needs and focused on their level of experience in the field.

When discussing her ideas about training, Nita said, “I don’t think there is enough things individualized”. She thought that training needs ought to be determined on an individual basis taking the teachers’ needs into consideration. Instead, she said, “It’s always here’s your training. Read this book. Fill out these papers. You’re ready to go to the classroom.” Typically, any individualization of training was based on the teachers’ ability to choose some training on their own from what was available. Helen gave an example:

> There was one [conference] in [nearby town] at the church, where they put us in different rooms. The main room was all resource material. You got to go to different rooms and that was very good. Because that pertained more individually to what you needed.

In this case, she was able to make decisions about which sessions at a conference she would participate in based on her understandings of what would be helpful to her. Other teachers discussed the ways in which they thought that on-going training experiences should be individualized based on the unique learning characteristics of individual teachers. Mary explained:

> There is sometimes people three years down the line that are at exactly the same level as when they started. So, I think it is a very, should be a very individualized system. Because some of us are going to take longer and some people are naturals. So, I believe that training is so mass-produced right now and it needs to

be more individualized as far as how much you need to go and how often you need to do it.

Several of the teachers talked about the need for individualized training based on the "experience level" of the teacher. In discussing their training classes, most of these teachers thought that the majority of the trainers of their training classes had taken the experience level of the participants into consideration and that most did a good job instructing teachers with a "wide variety" of experience levels. Other teachers, like Ilene, were not so sure. She explained:

> It seems like a lot of times, that it is more based on people who know, due to experience, a lot of these things. As a new person sitting in you go, I have no idea what they are talking about because they are aiming it toward a more experienced, you know, they have more time in this field. So, it seemed like a lot times it was aimed toward people who had been there a lot longer.

Lisa felt that more training should be individualized, but was skeptical about how it would work. She said, "Well, you couldn't really do that. It wouldn't work. You couldn't sit down and individualize everybody. I mean how would you know exactly what they had done and what they hadn't?"

In the early childhood field, there are underlying assumptions and understandings that teachers need to provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences for children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). This idea has extended toward thinking about developmentally appropriate educational experiences for adults (Sheerer & Bauer, 1996; Bloom, Sheerer, & Britz, 1991). According to Bloom, Sheerer, & Britz (1991), we need

to look at the individual characteristics of adult learners in much the same way we look at children:

> Teachers focus not only on developmental stages of young children, but also on unique developmental patterns, experiences, abilities and backgrounds of individual children. Yet in our preservice and inservice programs for the professional development of early childhood teachers, we seem to have forgotten this developmental focus. Instead, training programs continue to be designed for an entire staff, as if all teachers had the same backgrounds, interests and needs. (p.71)

Many of the teachers in this study thought that training ought to be more individualized in terms of consideration of the unique training needs of individual staff and their level of experiences in the field. However, within their discussion of this idea, several of the teachers qualified their statements by saying that they were not sure that this was a realistic expectation.

**Need for Training Based on Administrators' Evaluations**

> *And I believe also that when a teacher starts that the director and sit and observe. What you are teaching. How you are teaching. And it's not to scold you or embarrass you or to write you up, but you just might need a little push to just be a little tougher on that, whatever you are doing. (Quinn)*

The need for administrative evaluation to determine training needs was listed by many of the teachers in this study as a missing element in their experience with training in the child care field. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the majority of these teachers

felt they had been “thrown in the classroom” and left to “figure out how to do it” by themselves. Evaluation by directors was not mentioned as a component of their learning how to be a teacher, but several of these teachers thought it should have been. When asked about their ideas for training, the teachers said that they thought administrators should be more observant of their classroom practices and should plan training based on that observation.

Helen spoke at length about her ideas for administrative evaluation. She explained:

> If the director will be more observant in the classroom, I can think of one classroom that doesn’t have a lot of things around and I think the director needs to go in and say, now there is not enough, really, where is your activities for your class? So, she might say I want you to go and get some ideas or maybe some things for your room.

In addition to observing in the classroom to identify training needs, Helen also thought that the director should ask questions to better understand where the teacher felt that she was having issues. Possible questions that Helen suggested included, “What do you feel in your classroom?” and “What are your main concerns and needs for your class?” She felt that questions such as these would help administrators understand where the teachers stood in their developmental progression. She added, “I’ll bet you would get a good response from those teachers”. She based this on her observation that “there are a lot of frustrations with new people” and her understanding that “those need to be pinpointed at training”. After identifying the different training needs of teachers,

particularly “if the director receives two or three on the same topic” then she needs to find out “who can train in that field or whatever”.

Beth also saw administrative evaluation as an important area for training. She said that if she was the director, she would, “have to see their areas where they are weak” so that she could “suggest the things that I feel they need to work on”. She also added that she felt administrators should observe teachers after training to see if she “would have to re-train them again”. According to her, administrators rarely observed in classrooms and she felt that this was something that would help identify training needs.

Mary said that she thought administrative evaluation should be an on-going process to monitor and evaluate training needs. She explained:

> I do believe that an ideal administration would come in and do evaluations after you start. If you are a new employee, ninety days, come and evaluate then again in six months come evaluate, one year, come evaluate.

According to her, a crucial component of administrative evaluation is that the administrators themselves “have the understanding” and “have the experience” in order to be able to identify the training needs of the teachers.

To Gin, administrator evaluation was not about scheduled observations as much as it was about addressing training needs as they arose. As she said, “The first thing I think is not on a six month or a year basis”. Instead, if she were a director, she said she would address concerns immediately. She explained further:

> If I have a parent come to me and they are complaining of something, the second the parent comes to me and they are complaining of something, after I find out if

it is a valid complaint, I find material on how to teach that to that worker. Train them.

Only one of the teachers in this study discussed formalized training plans for teachers coming from administrators. Olga mentioned a previous center she had worked in that was part of a national chain and monthly trainings were held at different centers within the organization. According to her, "It was a time for all the teachers at all the centers that were in the corporation to come together and share ideas and discuss problems and issues they were having with children and things like that". The topics of the monthly trainings were predetermined in advance by administrators. None of the other teachers in this study thought that any of their current and previous directors had made any type of formal training plans, individualized or center-wide. Although there may have been plans that they were not aware of, this lack of knowledge of purposeful planning for training added another layer to the teacher's thinking that directors do not focus on training in ways they thought they should.

In this theme, several points are discussed in terms of the teachers' ideas about administrative evaluation for training. First, many of these teachers thought that administrators should observe in classroom to assess training needs and that plans for training should be based on those assessments Second, several of these teachers thought that administrative observation in classrooms should occur at regular intervals to monitor progress, but that immediate response to training needs was important as well.

**Need for Training on Specific Age Groups**

> *It needs to be broken down more. It needs to be geared more for ages, per age and discipline for maybe a one year old who doesn't know how to use his words and all he can do is fight. You know, a two year old can start using some words and, you know, so it's got to be geared for age or it is just not going to… Because just because what I do for my five year olds isn't going to work for a one year old. (Anna)*

The need for more training on specific age groups was another theme revealed in the transcript data. The teachers' understandings of this need were expressed in two ways. First, there was a general consensus that teachers needed information about children's development and curriculum expectations related to their age range and that there was a lack of training of this nature. Second, many of these teachers expressed their frustration at having to attend training on different age groups when they found the information to be irrelevant for the particular needs of their classrooms.

***Training on Specific Developmental and Curricular Needs Related to Age Group***

For many of the teachers in the study, the lack of training on their particular age group is seen as a major issue and they would agree with Nita when she said that this is a "big problem in child care". She thought that many of the teachers just do not understand basic development differences related to the age of the children in their classroom. She explained:

> When you are in the two year old room, teachers need to understand that they are two but they are not stupid. They can start learning stuff. There are plenty of two year olds that can learn their shapes- circle, triangle, square. And everybody just

had the idea that, oh, they are just two. There is not a lot of working with the children as individuals. So, I'd really like to see more training in working with a child one-to-one, individual levels and curriculum.

Lisa also spoke of this need for more training about specific age groups. She said, "I would like child development. Just training with the children [as an] individual". She thought that if you are a "prek teacher" then you need "on-going training with prek functions, how they think, how to discipline them, how to talk to them, how to redirect them". In other words, basic information about the specific age group they work with.

Mary was alarmed at what she saw as a lack of age specific training for infant teachers. She explained:

> I think that, especially infants, you are having teachers come in who have never even picked up a baby. That's scary. I would never put my child in a room with a teacher who didn't have it. You know, because you don't know if they will put them on their stomach or on their back or if they will burp them. To me, that's very frightening. And that's what's scary. I mean SIDS, yeah, they give you a SIDS training and CPR and that's about it. And then you are off to go. That doesn't show, to me, as hopefully to be a parent in the future. I would never put my child in a center that the infant teacher didn't have more than SIDS and CPR training.

Cara discussed the need for more curriculum training related to her age group. As a teacher of two year old children, she felt like the curriculum expectations of her center did not take the developmental needs of her children into consideration. Therefore, she would like to see further training on "how to maintain the curriculum and follow it". In

talking about her posted lesson plans, she said, “I can tell you right now that I don’t do everything that I write down. I might do a thing or two depending on, because my thing is to teach them how to potty train. And I spend a lot of time with them on the potty. You know, I take care of 11 children and they want them potty trained by the time they turn three.” She wanted further training on meeting the children’s developmental needs within an age appropriate curriculum and felt that she had not received it.

For Beth, this lack of training specific to age groups led to problems within the actual training classes. Due to not “having enough training for that for teachers”, the training classes “can’t address the problems that [the teachers] might be having to help them out”. She said, “I know I’ve gone to some training and well, what age do you work with? And then they get into bickering because they want to talk about their group and the other teacher wants to talk about her group.”

According to these teachers, few of the trainings they had attended had focused on the particular age and developmental level of children in their classrooms. They see this type of training as extremely important for their learning how to be a teacher and think that age-related training should be included in both preservice and inservice training opportunities.

***Find Training on Different Age Groups Irrelevant***

In addition to a lack of training on their specific age groups, many of these teachers expressed their frustration at having to attend training that they thought they did not need because it did not address their particular needs of their age group. As Helen

explained, when training is too "broad", then you "don't get a lot out of it". Gin explained:

> It's got to be age appropriate when you go to a seminar or a training and you've got a one year old teacher and you've got a six year old, after-school, and a four year old teacher in there, the expectations of those children are no where near the same. It's hard… so what you're telling me is great, yeah it might be great for that four year old, it's not going to work in my one year old class.

According to her, part of the problem is that "you've got to get your hours" and therefore "we're going to do blanket for everyone". As she said, "If I'm in the four year olds and you tell me how to change diapers, I really don't need to know that…but I need to know what is expected of my room. And concentrate on it and focus on it." She expressed that "a lot of the trainings are too generic" and that "that training should be focused more on the class that you are in at that time." Doreen also said that thought teachers "didn't need to go" to classes that did not focus on their age group when "you don't work in there" and "can't use it".

Francis said that she was often required to go to classes that she felt she did not need. She explained:

> The corporate was real bad about that because it was mandatory and we had to be there and it was stuff like, OK, it's infants, but I'm not doing infants. Or I'm not doing after-schoolers, so this has nothing to do with what I'm doing.

She said that she always tried "to look for something that is more for my age group" or something that was "close enough". When "close enough" was all she could find, she said she would take the information and try to "tone it down" for her age group.

She added, “For the most part, you have to take what’s out there and kind of apply it.” Penny also felt that she had to figure out how to use information that was not directly related to the age group she taught and said that she would “apply it how it need to be applied”. Like Francis, she said that these trainings were mandatory, but that she did not think they really helped her. She explained:

> Especially if it is a lot of lecture type training and it’s speaking to a whole and if you are in a baby class or in a toddler class, then it doesn’t really relate to you but you are required to have to go to it. It’s not going to do you any good. Sometimes it needs to be kind of broken up. Because there are a lot of times where I would really like to know, hey, what am I supposed to do when I have an out-of-control after-schooler? You know, I can’t restrain them and half of them can beat me up.

It was the general opinion of the majority of the teachers in this study that attending training classes where the content did not relate to their age group was, in essence, a waste of their time. When they were required to attend classes that did not pertain to their age group or when those were the only training options available to them, several teachers said that they tried to apply the information to their children as best they could.

In this theme, three points were discussed relating to the teachers’ ideas concerning the need for further training relating toe the age of the children in their classrooms. First, the teachers thought that there should be more opportunities available for training classes that pertain to their age group. Second, they said they were often frustrated by having to attend training classes that they did not think applied to their

classroom. Finally, the perceived shortage of training in this area, lead many to think that they had to "tone down" information presented in their training classes to be able to use it in their classroom.

**Need for Something Different**

> *I've got a few more hours left and it's like, okay, now I've done all this and I want something different. I think it is often the same old same old. It's seems like it is the same repeated over and over again. And especially this time of year because they do all of the after-schooler stuff, you know, getting ready for the after-schoolers and, you know, that doesn't work for me. (Francis)*

Several of the teachers in this study spoke, as Francis did, of wishing for something different in their training experiences. Not all of these teachers could name what it was that they wanted to be different, but just expressed this desire. Others did have some suggestions relating to both content and delivery of training.

Penny said that she did not "know exactly what is all out there" but thought that "has to be something different than what I've been going to". According to her, the trainers need to "just change it up or something". Doreen thought that many of the classes were just "plain" and that she had not gone to many that were "really, really, really good". As she said, "You know, it's more about the paint and the water tray and nothing else that is going to help get us ready for the kids that I have".

Beth wished for training that responded to current events that she heard about on the news in which children have been injured or left in vans. She explained:

> I think out there, there is not enough training with seeing all of the things that have happened recently. I think that is very important that they do stuff with safety. Even safety in the classrooms, because a child can get hurt and have to have stitches and any little thing like that. They need more training on making sure toys are safe and your room is child-proof.

While Cara did not think that she really needed more training, her ideas were similar to Beth's in terms of wanting information about current events. She said, "Just updates. Updates on, you know, like issues that are going around." When asked for more detail, she indicated that she wanted more information on child care licensing requirement changes and other new ideas or research in the early childhood field.

Two teachers, Joyce and Quinn, mentioned "sociology" as a different training topic that neither had seen as a choice listed for child care training classes. Joyce said, "Out of all the training I have had, my sociology class in college was the most helpful." When asked to elaborate, she did:

> Well, my first sociology class was just the basic and I learned that different backgrounds, different families, did different things. And, my family problems class… you never know what your child is going through. And that has helped me out a lot to kind of, not pick them out, but work with them more.

When asked if this related to how she understood children's behavior, she replied, 'Yes, understand, work with them, help them, you know, get with the other kids because they are all going through a lot. I don't think they are just bad. Or whatever."

Quinn also mentioned a college class on sociology and one on assisting children with special needs. She felt that training classes in both of these subject areas would be

very helpful for child care teachers. She said that sometimes other teachers will ask her about those classes and ask her opinion on children that are having a difficult time in their classrooms. She explained:

> Some children are ADD or ODD and I can tell. I'm not a doctor, but I know what's happening. And it is so important and even though sometimes the parents are still in denial, it's just, you know, and then you have like, in some of the places where I have worked, the director or the owner now can say, I have a special teacher that has some learning techniques and if you need any help from her, you know, feel free to express yourself with her. So, it works out very well. In some places, you can't do that.

A couple of the teachers mentioned wanting something different in the delivery of training. Helen said, "I wish we had more people that could come to the center to do training". Gina wished for something different in the form of resources books. She explained:

> I have a hard time reading non-fiction. I read fiction all the time, but I have a hard time with non-fiction. Just because it repeats over and over and there's usually one little thing I need help with and I don't want to read the whole book to get the little thing I need. I honestly think it would be beneficial to have like, I know back when we were studying for the [standardized] test in school, you would have like this little thin notebook and you could go get it and pull it out and look at this one thing. Something like that. That might help.

In this theme, some of the teachers' viewpoints about wanting "something different" were explored. While several of the teachers expressed this desire, most did

not or could not articulate exactly what that might entail. Those who did have ideas for "something different", listed variations in topic content and additional training resources.

**Need for More Training**

> *I don't think it is enough. I think maybe five more hours added to it because there is so much you can learn. Even with repeated classes, you can learn. And, you know, everybody goes, oh, you're a good teacher and I go, I'm a good teacher because I got the training and that's how I learned this stuff. (Francis)*

The most pervasive theme in the data concerning the teachers' perceptions about their training was the need for more training. Only one teacher, Cara, felt the current requirements were adequate. She said, "As far as more and more training, so many hours of training, I don't think we need it." The other 17 teachers did not agree and spoke of the need for more training both pre-service and inservice. For them, the current state standards which consists of eight clock hours of preservice (for those new to the field) and 15 annual clock hours of inservice are inadequate for the needs of child care teachers. In addition to thinking that not enough inservice training is required, several of the teachers discussed what they see as a problem with the way that the standards are currently written concerning annual clock hours. In this theme, I will explore the teacher's discussion of the need for more training both preservice and inservice.

***More Preservice Training***

When Beth discussed her ideas concerning preservice training, she was adamant that the current requirements were not enough. She said, "I think that I needed more training. I think eight hours can only touch the surface. I think it needs to at least be 16

or 20 hours. Before they start working in the classroom by themselves." Mary also thought that the current requirements fell short. She explained:

> I believe that, well, there is this 15 hours per year, I think that before you ever walk into the classroom with children, I believe you should have at least 15 hours of training. Not including the paperwork stuff. Fifteen hours of hands-on training from somebody who knows going from discipline to your daily schedule. You walk into a classroom and have to do a lesson plan. Some people have never even seen it. And have no training. So, I believe that you should have at least 15 hours before you ever walk into a classroom.

For Olga, she would start with the current preservice requirement, but add more to it. She stated: "I think with the pre-service, what we have already is good, the eight hours, but then I would add to that five more hands-on in-classroom type training to get an idea of what is going on and how it is going to be."

***More Inservice Training***

In addition to more preservice training, the majority of the teachers also think that more inservice training is needed. As Doreen said, "They definitely should get more than 15 hours". Randy thought that teachers should get between 24 and 36 clock hours of training per year and that perhaps training should occur monthly. She explained:

> I think there should be a two or three hour training course once a month just to refresh and also if teachers have any questions, you know, things that might have come up throughout the month. Or they have a certain situation that maybe they are thinking about or maybe they thought they could have handled differently.

They could try to get other people's opinion and inspire them to try a different way.

Mary also thought that training should occur monthly. She said, "I believe that it should be three hours a month". She thought that having training monthly would provide teachers with more training and prevent teachers from waiting until their end of their year to participate in training. She pointed out that "a lot of people put that 15 hours off until the last month before their year turns over". She continued, "Because I know so many people who wait for those last weekends of their year and they are busting their rears to get these training hours done." When this happened, she did not think that the training was as effective. She exclaimed, "It is just silly. Every 11 months is just not enough to me to get help on how to deal with these children". However, she did think that alterations should be made for teachers who had "worked in child care for 27 years of something like that".

While Kim thought that teachers need training, she also thought that spreading it out into monthly training would be better. As she said, "You could go to a training once a month for an hour and a half and still get all the training you have to have for the year." She was concerned about teachers having to pay for training if they participated in more than their required hours. She said, "Some companies don't pay if you go over 15. If you want more, you have to pay." She felt that the standards needed to change so that the "companies" would pay for the required training although the current state standards do not require centers to pay for training.

According to these teachers, not only did they think that not enough inservice training was required, they also thought that the way the standards are written created a

situation in which teachers could go long periods of time without training only to have to catch up at the end of year. The state standards currently require that "each caregiver and director must obtain their annual training within 12 months from the date of their employment and during each subsequent 12-month period." (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2006, p.43). Olga found this problematic. She explained:

> I think the biggest problem that I have with the 15 hours right now is the fact that you can go… you have 15 hours from one year of your hire date… and you can go eleven months and not have any training and you can get all 15 hours done in one month. So, for 10 months, you've got no training at all. Or, you could work for a place for 11 months and move to another place and never have training at all. And I think it should be more specific, like an x amount of hours per month that you have to receive. And not necessarily according to your hire date, you know, because, to me, that's a problem, too.

Her solution would be to have monthly trainings. She said, "I've worked for centers where we were required to have monthly trainings." She thought that this was more effective and that "you just learn a lot more and you are able to retain a lot more instead of waiting until crunch time and getting it all done and then not doing it again for the next 12 months".

Gin also talked about this "problem". She said:

> If you say I've got 15 hours to get, I need a job, I need to work somewhere, as long I'm out of there before a year, I don't have to take one class. Not one. If I don't stay at that place, if I go to the next place… the state doesn't look at each

> school you go to. I could hop from day care to day care. Never have any training…I've seen so many people at so many different day cares rush to get their 15 in and they don't care what they are taking. They don't pay attention. They will sign up for anything you gave them because they need it for that job because they are pushing it. And that does what good in the classroom? A number is a number unless you can use it in the classroom.

While the exact number of clock hours these teachers thought should be added to the state requirements varied, the general consensus was that teachers need more preservice and inservice training. Further, many of the teachers expressed concern about the current standards requirement for annual training and their understanding that it allows for teachers to work for long periods of time without training or to change centers and not participate in any training.

"Everything under the Sun", explored seven themes found within the data concerning the teachers' ideas about their training needs. In the first theme, "Need for Basic Preservice Training", I explored the teachers' ideas about the content and format of preservice training which they thought the content of classes should include basic knowledge about caring for children and information about how to teach in their classrooms as well as their understanding that actual training classes would be a better learning format than self-studies. In the second theme, "Need for Preservice Opportunities to Observe Master Teachers", I explored the teachers' ideas concerning preservice observation of either the current classroom teacher or an experienced teacher within their center and their reasoning for these types of training experiences are difficult to enact within their centers. In the third theme, "Need for Individualize Training", I

explored the teachers' desire for training based on their unique needs and their level of experience in the field. In the fourth theme, "Need for Training Based on Administrators' Evaluations", I explored the teachers' discussions about the role they thought administrators should take in terms of observing their classroom practices and providing training based on those assessed needs. In the fifth theme, "Need for Training on Specific Age Groups", I explored the teachers' understandings that further training is needed that relates to the age group of the children in their classrooms, how irrelevant they found training that did not relate, and the how they discuss having to apply information not intended for their age group to their classroom. In the sixth theme, "Need for Something Different", I explored the teachers' viewpoints concerning the desire for something different in terms of the topic content and resources. In the seventh and final theme, "Need for More Training", I explored the teachers' understanding that child care teachers need more training, both preservice and inservice, and their concerns about the current state standards.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the four sections of this chapter, I have presented the findings from this study concerning child care teachers' descriptions of their professional development experiences and their perceptions' of those experiences. The following provides a summary of these findings:

### PERCEPTIONS OF PRESERVICE TRAINING EXPERIENCES

- The majority of teachers in the study reported little to no preservice training prior to their entry into the field. Eleven of the 18 teachers should have received eight

clock hours of preservice training as required by state standard, however none reported that they had completed a full eight hours.

- Due to a lack of preservice training, many of the teachers felt they had to learn how to do their jobs on their own. They reported three modes for learning to be a teacher: using their own intrinsic abilities, learning from experience in the classroom, and learning from other teachers by watching and asking questions.
- Many of these teachers felt that colleagues were their greatest resource for learning how to be a teacher and that they learned more from them than from any other source.

**PERCEPTIONS OF INSERVICE TRAINING EXPERIENCES**

- State requirements for on-going training require teachers to participate in 15 clock hours per year. Two of 18 teachers had not worked one full year and were still in the process of obtaining their annual training. Of the remaining 16, only two reported that they had not consistently met this requirement during their tenure in the field.
- While the teachers reported attended training classes on a variety of topics, the three most frequently mentioned topics included planning developmentally appropriate learning activities, guidance techniques and the discipline of children, and parent relations.
- Repetition of topics for training classes was seen as positive for the majority of these teachers due to how different trainers may have different perspectives and even repetition of the same trainer might reveal new information.

- Sources for training included “in-house” classes conducted by administrators or guest speakers and “outside” workshops, seminars or conferences within the community. Most of the teachers reported participating in both sources with only four reporting that all of their training had been “in-house” and seven reporting that all of their training had been “outside”.
- Great variation existed in funding for training classes and pay for teachers’ time in training. Due to this many of the teachers spoke of searching for free training classes.
- While the teachers describe the overall quality of their experiences in positive terms, almost all reported a few training classes in which they felt the content had been impractical, incorrect, or from a different philosophical viewpoint with which they could not identify.
- The majority of the teachers preferred interactive formats for learning in their training classes such as group discussion and hands-on activities as opposed to lectures or videos.
- Two important qualifications for trainers discussed by the teachers were background experience working with children, preferably in child care centers, and an enthusiastic or charismatic speaking style.

**PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF TRAINING ON PRACTICE**

- For most of these teachers, training classes were thought to influence their practice by inspiring them to try new ideas in terms of classroom activities and guidance techniques, and providing them with a sense of renewal in terms

of motivation. Only three teachers spoke of the influence of training on their practice as providing a deeper impact on their understanding of children and families.

**PERCEIVED ROLE OF TRAINING IN THE FIELD**

- Most of the teachers thought that the teacher is the most important element in providing quality; therefore, they described a relationship between training and quality in which appropriate training of teachers leads to increased quality in their centers.
- When discussing the relationship between training and teacher turnover, two-thirds of the teachers initially stated that they thought turnover was not connected to training but was a result of hiring the wrong people (due to age, lack of experience, dynamics of center, children of their own), however nearly all of these teachers did think that training might help the turnover situation. For the six teachers that did see a relationship between training and turnover, it was thought that minimal amounts of training create more turnover issues.
- Inconsistency in director attitudes about training led many of the teachers to think that it is important for administrators to show support and interest in the training of their teachers.

**PERCEIVED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS**

- Many of the teachers identified a need for preservice training that includes basic information on a variety of topics and requirements about the expectations for teachers.
- Many of the teachers identified a need for the opportunity for new teachers to be able to observe either an experienced teacher or the teacher they would be replacing.
- Many of the teachers identified a need for training to be individualized according to the unique needs of teachers and their levels of experience in the field.
- Many of the teachers identified a need for training to be based on an administrator's evaluation obtained through observation in the classroom and from their knowledge of center needs.
- Many of the teachers identified a need for more training related to the specific developmental and curricular needs of the age group in their care.
- Several teachers identified a need for different training in terms of content and delivery.
- Nearly all of the teachers identified a need for more preservice and inservice training.

# Chapter Five: Discussion & Implications

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional development of child care teachers working in for-profit child care centers through their descriptions of their training experiences and their perceptions of those experiences in relation to their practice and to their understandings of the role training plays in the field. Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews with 18 teachers working in six different centers, and qualitative research techniques were used to analyze the transcript data. In Chapter Four, I presented the findings of this study. In this chapter, I will summarize these findings in relation to the specific research questions guiding this study, include discussion of these findings, explore the implications of this study for the field, point out limitations of the study, provide suggestions for future research, and discussion conclusions that I drew from the findings of this study.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study began with a rather broad question about how child care teachers' describe their professional development experiences and also with specific questions about those experiences. In this section, I will review and summarize how the findings contained in Chapter Four respond to the questions guiding this study.

### How do child care teachers working in for-profit centers describe their professional development experiences?

Looking at this question through the teachers' descriptions and perceptions of their experiences as portrayed through the themes in Chapter Four, the finding from this

study demonstrate that child care teachers' professional development is multi-faceted consisting of a variety of components that includes their participation in organized training classes but also relies heavily on their experiences in their classrooms and their interactions with others in their work environment. In descriptions of their professional development experiences, the teachers shared their perceptions of their training classes and expressed their views about the role of this form of professional development in the field, however it becomes increasing clear through analysis of the data that their experiences within their center context, outside of organized training classes, play a crucial role in their learning to be a teacher. In the following sections, I respond to the individual research questions based on the findings of this study.

**What amounts, sources, contents, and formats do the teachers describe?**

***Amount of Training***

In exploring the amount of training the teachers reported to have participated in, interview discussions were framed around the required amounts listed in the state regulations. As previously mentioned, the state regulations for child care centers in Texas require teachers to participate in eight clock hours of preservice training, if they have no previous experience or training, and 15 hour clock hours of inservice training annually (Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, 2006). Analysis of the transcript data revealed three trends in the teachers' descriptions of their training amounts. First, the teachers reported little to no preservice training. As the state mandated preservice requirement went into effect in 1995, only 11 of the teachers would have been required to participate in this form of training, but none of those reported they

did. Second, the teachers reported having participated in relatively minimal amounts of inservice training. For approximately half of these teachers, the minimum amount of inservice training (15 clock hours annually) as required in the state regulations is all they reported participating in. The other teachers reported participating in more than the 15 clock hours required by the state regulations. However, this additional training only amounted to an extra five clock hours per year on average. Third, those teachers reporting extra hours were typically those with greater longevity in the field. It seems that training begets training for these teachers as they were also more likely to speak of taking "responsibility" for their own training and actively searching for further training opportunities.

Considering that most of these teachers came into the field without prior training or education, received little or no preservice training and then participated in relatively minimal amounts of inservice training, their descriptions of their entry experiences as detailed in the theme "Thrown in the Classroom" do not seem overstated. These teachers were literally "Figuring out How to Do It" on their own. Further questioning about their entry experiences revealed that the teachers relied heavily on their own strengths and problem-solving capabilities. The teachers described three modes for learning how to be a teacher which included utilizing their own intrinsic abilities, learning from experience in their classrooms, and learning from other teachers. Descriptions of the teachers' professional development experiences, particularly as they entered the field, showed that, for these teachers, learning how to be a teacher had less to do with participating in organized preservice or inservice training classes, and more to do with learning from their experiences and interactions within the context of their centers.

***Sources***

For most of the teachers in this study, other teachers were described as their greatest source of information for learning about their jobs. As Gina said, "I've learned more from them than probably anything ever". Even in training classes, teachers reported preferring those that allowed opportunities for group discussion because they felt they benefited from hearing about the experiences of others. Most of these teachers reported working in classrooms as the only adult and opportunities to learn from other teachers were very limited, but teachers reported actively searching for chances to watch other teachers in their classrooms and finding opportunities to ask other teachers questions about their practice. As these teachers reported a lack of preservice training entering the field and minimal inservice training in the field, other teachers appear to be a primary source of information for learning how to be a teacher.

When they did participate in training classes, the teachers described two sources for these classes. One was "in-house" training classes that were conducted by their administrators or guest speakers coming to the center. These classes were typically mandatory and the entire staff was to attend regardless of how relevant the teachers may have perceived the material presented to be to their actual training needs. The other source was "outside" community-based workshops and seminars. The teachers found out about these classes from flyers sent to their directors in the mail. Most of the teachers described being allowed to choose which classes they would participate in from the availability of those being offered, but frequently teachers spoke of just having to go to whatever was available because they needed to get their designated hours for the year. They also spoke of deliberately searching for and choosing free classes so that neither

they nor their center would have to pay for them. Throughout the teachers' descriptions of their experiences, there was very little evidence that classes were chosen in response to specific training needs and none of the teachers reported any form of individualized or center-wide training plans. Based on the teachers' descriptions, sources for training classes appear to be limited to those your director can provide or what is available at that moment in time in the community.

As these teachers reported little to no preservice training and minimal amounts of inservice training, as described in theme "Thrown in the Classroom", the training classes themselves were not their primary source for learning how to be a teacher. The findings from this study demonstrate that learning from other teachers in their center is a crucial source of information within the professional development experiences of these teachers. While the teachers speak positively of "in-house" and "outside" training classes, it is clear that these sources are limited in their ability to address the immediate and on-going professional development needs of the teachers and can be seen as secondary to the on the job learning that teachers sought for themselves.

***Contents***

In discussions about the content or topics of their training classes, many of the teachers reported that they had attended classes on a variety of topics. However, when asked about specific topics listed in the state regulations, most of the teachers could only recall having participated in training covering a few of the 15 categories. Based on their descriptions, the majority of their classes centered around two general topics, planning developmentally appropriate learning activities and techniques for guiding children's

behavior. Many of the teachers also reported attending classes on the topic of parent communication, although that topic is not listed in the state regulations. This lack of breadth in the content provided in training classes did not go unnoticed by the teachers. Many spoke of needing further training on different aspects of their job, particularly in relation to the specific needs of the age group of the children in their classrooms.

In addition to the limited choice of topics for training classes, several other issues related to content were found within the teachers' descriptions of their experiences in training classes particularly in terms of the broadness of content in many of their training classes, the impractical nature of some of the content, and the repetition of content topics. Most of the teachers described the content of their classes as very broad from the standpoint that it attempted to respond to teachers working with all age groups as well as teachers with varying levels of experience. While this may be practical when a training class is being held for the entire staff, it limits deeper exploration of topics as related to particular age groups or individual teachers' needs. Many of the teachers also gave examples of training classes in which they found the content to be impractical for their particular context. For example, the teachers described the way that some training classes portrayed what the teachers saw as a "perfect" classroom with lower child/staff ratios and did not see how they could apply the information to their classroom in light of the larger child/staff ratio utilized at their center. Teachers also reported a repetition of topics in training classes. Although many of the teachers found this repetition helpful as a "reminder" or a "refresher", it further limited opportunities to explore other topics.

While many of the teachers indicated they had participated in classes on a variety of topics, further analysis of their responses revealed that many of the classes contained

similar content and there was a considerable amount of repetition in topics. A lack of systematic plans for training and limited sources for training classes contribute to this overall picture of randomness in their experiences with training classes. For many of these teachers, much of the content of their training classes does not respond to their individual training needs nor does it respond to the context in which they work.

***Formats***

According to the teachers, the most common format utilized in their training classes was lecture even though many of them did not find this format as effective as others. Most of the teachers said they preferred interactive formats such as group discussion, which provided them the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others, and hands-on activities, which they thought were more conducive to their learning of the presented material and more closely matched their experiences in the classroom.

Closely related to this issue of format are the teachers' perceptions about the trainers of their classes. Two characteristics were identified by the teachers as important and were thought to influence their reception of the content. First, the teachers felt that it was very important for trainers to have "real world" experience in child care centers in order for them to be able to connect with the information presented. Just as the teachers thought impractical or unrealistic content did not contribute to their learning experiences, they also thought the trainer needed to have experience in a context similar to theirs in order to understand their situations and provide them with information and examples that would apply to their classroom. Second, the teachers thought that the trainers' personality contributed to their learning experience. Many of the teachers expressed

difficulty in learning from trainers that were considered “boring”. Given that the teachers are required to participated in a designated amount of training classes and sometimes attendance is based on more on their need to obtain their required hours and less on their specific training needs, it is not surprising that some of the teachers evaluated their training classes from the perspective of how entertaining the presenter was or if they could keep them “awake”.

The teachers’ descriptions and perceptions about formats for training classes, including the characteristics of trainers, revealed the teachers’ preference for classes that engaged them in activity and interaction with others. Opportunities to learn from the experiences of others, including the experiences of the trainers, are seen as enhancing their learning experience in classes, while formats that are more didactic, such as “boring” lectures, are not seen as helpful nor are they considered to be as conducive to their learning.

**What perceived relationship of professional development to their classroom practice do the teachers describe?**

Most of the teachers in this study did not describe deep relationships between what they had learned in their training classes and how they practice, although most felt that their classes had impacted their practice. Analysis of the teachers’ descriptions of how they thought training influenced what they do in their classrooms revealed two viewpoints. First, many teachers felt that training had influenced their practice by the way that “It Gets the Spark Going” in terms of providing them with new ideas for curriculum and guidance techniques to use in their classroom. This can be understood in light of their descriptions of their training topics which revealed that the majority of their

training classes were centered on the topics of planning developmentally appropriate learning activities and techniques for guiding children's behavior. Second, teachers also thought that training experiences provided them with a sense of "renewal" when the everyday challenges of working with children became overwhelming. Participation in training was seen as having a motivational influence. Only a few of the teachers spoke about training having a deeper influence on their thinking and understanding of children's behavior as is described in the theme, "That Training Has Always Stuck With Me".

The teachers' descriptions of the influence they think training has had on their practice appear limited, but when placed within the context of their context, this finding seems consistent. Limited training class opportunities, in terms of variation in topics and availability of classes, provides some explanation in that minimal training experiences would not have much of an impact on their practice. Further explanation can be found within the theme "Figuring Out how to Do it". The teachers' descriptions of their learning from other teachers within their center environments included detailed explanations about their methods of accessing the practical knowledge of their peers, through watching and asking questions, and how they thought they applied that knowledge in their practice. In the case of learning from their peers, the teachers reported identifying their own challenges (i.e. training needs) and then actively searching for ways to improve their practice. Comparing this mode of learning to their descriptions of having to choose training classes from what is available from limited sources and rarely participating in training classes based on a specific identified training need, further emphasizes the understanding as to why their training classes appear to have a rather limited impact on their practice. This is not to suggest that their training classes are not

important to their professional development because the teachers do describe ways that they think it does influence their practice, particularly through providing them with new ideas and motivation for teaching, but it does suggest that when looking at the professional development of child care teachers and the learning experiences that influence how they practice, the impact of the learning that takes place with in their center context seems to be an important consideration.

**How do the teachers describe the relationship of professional development to issues in the field such as quality and teacher turnover?**

To varying degrees, the teachers in this study saw training as something that "Can Only Make Things Better" and consistently stated that "training is important", almost to the point that they seemed to be stating a universal truism similar to how most of the general public would make the statement that "education is important". Clarifying exactly why they thought "training is important" and how they thought it could "make things better" presented many challenges as the teachers wrestled with their explanations of their understandings about the nature of the relationship between training and issues in the field such as quality and teacher turnover.

In discussions with the teachers about their perceptions of the relationship between training and quality, my purpose was not to delve into the teachers' conceptions of quality as much as it was to understand their perceptions of the relationship between training and quality. Questions about quality were framed in language that assumed a universal and common definition of quality as "good", specifically in terms of providing a "really good" child care center program that included "really good" experiences for children. The literature in the early childhood field over the last 30 years had consistently

indicated that there is a strong relationship between the training and education of early childhood teachers and the quality of care that children receive (e.g. NICHD, 2000; Helburn, 1995; Whitebook et al., 1989). While the teachers' discussions did not refer to research studies of quality, the majority did see a relationship between training and the quality of care that children receive. While much of the research literature on quality has focused on finding determinants of quality care, focusing on the structural characteristics of centers and to a lesser extent on the nature of the role that teachers play in the production of quality, the majority of these teachers were adamant that "It's the Teachers that Bring Quality to a Center". While center structural characteristics were included throughout their descriptions of their professional development (i.e. lack of preservice training was frequently thought to be a result of staffing challenges) and in relation to challenges they experienced as teachers (i.e. large child/staff ratios), their descriptions of the relationship between training and quality did not include discussion of those factors. Rather, analysis of the teachers' descriptions and perceptions indicated that many of the teachers see quality is an attribute of teachers and therefore, as training is thought to have an influence on practice, training is positively related to quality. Within their discussions, many teachers also indicated their thoughts that some teachers may enter the field already possessing characteristics that are likely to produce "quality" care, but this is tempered with an understanding that teachers can "grow" and that training opportunities can promote this growth.

The relationship that the teachers' described between training and teacher turnover was more complex. Many of the teachers seemed to struggle between their general understandings that "training is important" and their perceptions that training

may have a limited capacity to help some teachers, as is described in the theme, "Even with All the Training In the World…There Will be Turnover". Initial responses to questions about whether or not there was a relationship between training and teacher turnover revealed that two-thirds of the teachers did not immediately identify a relationship due to how turnover issues were thought to be related to the hiring of teachers who were not able to do the job and had "no idea what they were getting into". Within their discussions were understandings that teacher turnover may be related to age, maturity, parental status, or the dynamics of the center. However, when asked if they thought "more or different" training could make a difference, most all of these teachers altered their responses and concluded that "Training Might Help [Reduce] Turnover". In a sense, the teachers seem to be responding to the "idea" that training is important, and therefore must help, combined with their general perceptions that in order for teachers to "stick around", they must be prepossessing of personal characteristics that lead to levels of resiliency that will enable them to survive being "Thrown in the Classroom". As the majority of these teachers describe limited preservice training opportunities of their own, and therefore cannot base their discussion of the relationship on their own experiences, their understandings of the relationship must be considered from their general perceptions that "training is important" and from their current view, having now participated in some inservice training classes, that allow them to imagine that "more or better" preservice and initial training experiences may help reduce teacher turnover.

The teachers' descriptions and perceptions about the role of training in the field reveal that they do see relationships between training and important issues such as quality and teacher turnover, however these relationships are viewed through the teachers'

perceptions that personal characteristics of teachers play an important role in how teachers enter the field and in how they teach. For the most part, the teachers see limitations in the ability of training to "make things better" based on their understanding that "training will only help those who want to be helped".

**What insights can the teachers provide in regards to pre-service and in-service professional development?**

When the teachers in this study were asked specifically for their ideas about preservice and inservice training, they had much to say. Further, throughout their descriptions and perceptions about their professional development experiences, both in training classes and at their centers, the teachers frequently made references to how they thought professional development opportunities might better serve their needs, basing these insights on their own experiences and their imagining of alternative methods for professional development. As is described in the fourth section of Chapter Four, "Everything Under the Sun": Child Care Teachers' Perceptions About Their Professional Development Needs, the findings in this study revealed seven themes relating to the teachers viewpoints and ideas concerning both preservice and inservice training. I will briefly discuss these themes again here.

Perhaps the most pervasive theme found within the teachers' discussions was the "Need for More Training", both preservice and inservice. The majority of these teachers felt inadequately prepared to be teachers and found the minimal amounts of training as required by the state regulations to be lacking. Several also identified what they saw as a "problem" in the state regulation of 15 clock hours of inservice training per year, in that as this regulation states that teachers must obtain their yearly training based on their date

of hire, this allows teachers to go long periods of time without participating in any training and then "catch up" before the end of their year. In addition to more training, many of the teachers thought that adjustments in the state regulations were needed to ensure that teachers received adequate training opportunities.

The teachers' descriptions and perceptions of their professional development needs also included several themes related specifically to preservice training. Many of the teachers identified a "Need for Basic Preservice Training" particularly as many teachers arrive in the field without prior experience and training. They felt this preservice training should include basic knowledge about how to care for children as well as more detail about life in the classroom. It was expressed that preservice training in the form of self-study does little to prepare teachers and that actual classes were needed. In addition, many of the teachers stressed that new teachers have a "Need for Preservice Opportunities to Observe Master Teachers" at their centers in order to be prepared to handle the responsibilities associated with being a classroom teacher. As they thought many teachers come into the field "not having a clue", opportunities to observe within the classroom context were seen as important.

Teachers also identified a "Need for Individualized Training", both preservice and inservice, so that participation in training would be based the specific needs of teachers in terms of their individual strengths and weaknesses and on their levels of experience in the field. This was related to an understanding of the "Need for Training Based on Administrators' Evaluations" as many of the teachers felt that their administrators needed to take a stronger role in identifying the training needs of specific teachers and for the center as a whole.

Many of the teachers also discussed a "Need for Training on Specific Age Groups", as they found the content of many of their training classes to be too broad to adequately address the needs of each age group. Further, many of the teachers identified a "Need for Something Different" in their training experiences. While they had difficultly pinpointing exactly how "different" training might look, there was an understanding that the current method and content of their professional development experiences were not adequately addressing the needs of many teachers.

**DISCUSSION**

The research literature in the early childhood field indicates that the training and education of child care teachers is important. Studies have demonstrated that training is related to the quality of care that is provided to children (e.g. NICHD, 2000; Helburn, 1995; Whitebook et al., 1989) and training has been shown to be an effective means for promoting appropriate behaviors in teachers (e.g. Kaplan & Conn, 1984; Rhodes & Hennessey, 2000). The literature has also indicated that there are differences in center auspice as related to the quality of care provided to children (Morris & Helburn, 2000; Whitebook et al., 1989), but has not fully explored this finding in relation to child care teachers' professional development. Further, the literature has not provided insight into how child care teachers experience their professional development opportunities or provided the teachers with the opportunity to express their understandings of their experiences and their perceptions about their experiences. Nor has it provided answers as to how professional development opportunities for child care teachers, particularly for

those coming into the field with little to no preparation, should be organized and implemented. This study sought to begin to address these gaps in the literature.

The findings from this study, based on the teachers' experiences and their perceptions of those experiences, suggest that the field needs to reconceptualize how professional development opportunities for child care teachers are provided and organized so that they might better meet the needs of child care teachers.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD CARE TEACHER EDUCATION

The results of this study have many implications for child care teacher training and those who provide training including child care center administrators and child care teacher trainers.

First, the findings of this study suggest that the role of context needs to be considered in the design and implementation of training experiences for child care teachers. Providers of training need to take into account the center environments in which teachers work as they plan content for training classes. The current discourse in the early childhood field advocates that teachers need education and training on child development and developmentally appropriate practices (e.g. Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The teachers in this study would not disagree; in fact one of their concerns was that they do not receive enough training in relation to the specific age-related needs of the children in their classrooms. At issue, is how trainers are addressing context when they are presenting their topics, particularly in how their presentation of child development content relates to the context in which the teachers' practice. The teachers gave many examples of trainers presenting information as if it were a "perfect world". Many of the

teachers reported difficulty in understanding how to apply the information presented in their classrooms in light of the specific structural characteristics of their centers, such as larger child/staff ratios, working in their classroom as the only adult, or the realities day-to-day staffing challenges. While every child care center may be unique, the descriptions provided by these teachers of their experiences working in for-profit child care centers reveal some common characteristics particularly in relation to the influence of context on their learning experiences. While these characteristics are not necessarily unique to for-profit child care centers, they do define the experiences of these teachers in their particular centers. Some researchers have used the metaphor of a "landscape" when referring to "the exceedingly complex intellectual, personal and physical environment for teachers' work" (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997, p.673). In exploring teachers' practical knowledge, they have found that understanding how teachers practice involves far more than just what they do in their classroom, it involves understanding many dimensions of their personal and professional experiences (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997). In much the same way, the child care centers in which teachers work can be thought of as the teachers' professional knowledge landscapes and should be taken into consideration when planning for professional development experiences. Training classes and programs need to address the "real world" experiences of these teachers in their centers and training opportunities that use unrealistic scenarios, as compared to the context in which teachers' work, for examples do not provide the teachers with needed information and often cause the teachers to discount the information that is presented.

Second, in the teachers' descriptions of their experiences working in child care centers, peers played a significant role, particularly as they began working in the field.

Training experiences need to build on these peer relationships within child care centers, in their particular learning communities, where peer relationships contribute to how teachers come to know how to practice. Peers can be seen as playing an important role in the teachers' "professional knowledge landscape" (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997). The teachers in this study stated that other teachers were their greatest resource in learning how to be a teacher, similar to the manner in which student teachers in certification programs often describe their cooperating teachers as a "powerful source of influence" (Su, 1992, p.12). Peers need to be considered in the design and implementation of professional development opportunities for child care teachers as they are part of their "knowledge community" and interactions with these other teachers allows them the opportunity to construct meaning about their teaching experiences (Craig, 1995). Conle (1996) has used the term 'resonance' to describe the way that teachers develop practical knowledge through their interactions with other teachers. When teachers' hear stories of other teachers' experiences, they often make connections to their own experiences. Training opportunities that allow for peer interaction as well as opportunities within their centers to interact with other teachers would provide teachers the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others within their specific contexts.

Third, the teachers in this study also spoke of watching other teachers in their particular environments in order to improve their practice and identified observation of other teachers as a needed form of preservice training. Professional organizations, such as NAEYC (Willer, 1994) and ACEI (website), include practicum or laboratory experiences in their recommendations for the educational preparation of early childhood teachers. Training experiences that include observation of experienced and skilled

teachers, even within their center context, would better prepare child care teachers as they begin working in their classrooms. This implies the cultivation of mentors or master teachers within centers that can provide new teachers with relevant learning experiences.

Fourth, the findings of this study have implications for providers of training in terms of choosing the content and format for training classes. The state regulations in Texas list 15 different categories covering a wide range of topics focusing on child development and child care, however, most of the training classes that the teachers reported participating in only focused on a few of those categories. Providers of training for child care teachers need to offer classes on a variety of topics to address the varied needs of teachers. The teachers also spoke of their preference for interactive formats such as hands-on activities and group discussions, but thought that the majority of their training classes did not allow for such experiences. This is not so different from the findings of Fiszer's (2004) study of inservice workshops for public school teachers, in which he discovered that "the reality about traditional professional development for teachers is that it is often taught using methods not aligned with active learning". Many training classes, according to the teachers in this study, consisted of "boring" lectures that they thought did little to enhance their learning. Many practitioners of teacher training in the field have advocated that the methods used to teach children can be seen as a model for teaching adults (e.g. Carter & Curtis, 1994; Jones, 1993; Sheerer, 1997) and that opportunities for active learning should be incorporated into the design of training classes.

Fifth, the findings from this study also indicate teachers' individual needs should be evaluated and recognized in order to provide appropriate learning experiences. In

particular, these teachers thought that administrators of their programs should take a more active role in evaluating teachers' training needs. Supervisor support is considered an important dimension of early childhood work environments and directors are in a unique position to provide direction for professional growth (Bloom, 1998). According to Bloom, Sheerer, and Britz (1991), directors can assess individual teacher's needs by considering their "developmental patterns, experiences, abilities, and backgrounds" (p. 71). Assessment of teachers' individual needs, particularly by focusing on their past and present experiences, would provide directors more information as they search for or provide training opportunities for teachers. The teachers in this study highlighted the importance of the role of experience in their learning how to be a teacher. Training opportunities need to build on the teachers' classroom experiences and make a "connection between education and personal experience" (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.25). Explorations of teachers' experiences are needed in order to design training that builds on their experiences in a meaningful way.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR STATE REGULATING AGENCIES

The results of this study point to the need for state regulating agencies to set reasonable expectations for preservice and inservice training requirements based on research and on teachers' articulated needs. There also needs to be appropriate oversight to ensure that centers are complying with state-mandated training requirements. Many of the teachers in this study also expressed concerns about requirements for annual inservice training and thought that allowing teachers to obtain their required training on an annual basis created a situation in which teachers could go long periods of time without training

only to rush at the last minute to complete their designated hours. This finding suggests the need for state regulating agencies to review and modify training requirements to better address professional development for child care teachers.

## LIMITATIONS

One limitation to this study was that while I utilized random but "purposeful sampling" (Patton, 1990), it was also a "sample of convenience" (Mertens, 1998). The sample was purposeful in that participants were recruited from three types of for-profit child care centers (independently-own, small chains, and large corporate chains), however the directors of those centers dictated which teachers would be approached. In most cases, it appeared that the directors chose teachers that they believed were interested in the topic and also that they felt would be articulate. This form of a "sample of convenience" can be seen as limiting the diversity of the participants.

Another limitation of this study is the relatively short duration of data collection. While the transcript data seemed to reach "saturation" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) based on the interview questions asked, additional interviews conducted over a greater period of time might have allowed the teachers further opportunity to reflect on their professional development experiences and might have generated additional data for this study.

Finally, the lack of data on the teachers' practices can be seen as another limitation of this study. As data collection consisted of interviews with teachers, no data were collected on the teachers' practices or within their center context. Observation of teachers as they worked in their classrooms and interacted with others in their center

would have provided additional data that could have been utilized to further understand the teachers' experiences.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this study provide begin to provide some understanding of the professional development experiences of child care teachers working in for-profit centers and their perceptions of those experiences. Further exploration in this area is needed and would provide the field with additional insight. The results of this study also reveal areas for additional exploration so as to develop a deeper understanding of issues related to the professional development of child care teachers.

Further research into the child care teachers' experiences in the classroom and their perceptions of those experiences is needed in order to design training that builds on their experiences in a meaningful way. This study touched on their experiences in the classroom through their descriptions and perceptions of their professional development, but did not fully explore their descriptions of their teaching experiences within the center contexts. Further research on child care teachers' perceptions on all aspects of their work would provide the field with further insight into their professional development needs.

The teachers in this study found other teachers to be their greatest source for learning how to be a teacher and discussed their methods of accessing the knowledge of others through watching and asking questions. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) would describe the other teachers with whom teachers interact as part of their "professional knowledge landscape". They suggest narrative as a method of inquiry for exploring 'what teachers know' and 'how they come to know' within their particular landscapes.

Research that continues to explore this "landscape" in terms of how teachers are learning from others within their work environment will add to our understandings of how to support these teachers and to improve child care practices.

This study has pointed to the importance of the role of context in providing training experiences for child care teachers, particularly in terms of providing relevant content that addresses the needs of teachers in their center environment. As Chafel and Reifel (1996) point out, while context seems to be "an important construct for understanding theory and practice, we do not yet have a framework for understanding the term, "context", in all of its many uses- physical, psychological, social, community, societal, cultural, historical, ideological, and so on" (p.268). Further research in this area is needed to provide a broader understanding of how teachers relate to and learn from their experiences within their centers.

Finally, this study has identified that the professional development of child care teachers is influenced by the administrators at their centers, particularly in terms of the directors' attitudes and support for training. Further study of the director's role in the provision of training as well as the director's understandings and perceptions about the professional development of child care teachers would provide the field with greater insights for the provision of child care teacher training.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, I have drawn four conclusions. First, this study provides evidence that child care teachers' perspectives about their professional development can add to our understandings in the field of child care teachers' training

needs. Second, the findings reveal that teachers think that the state regulations for child care teacher training need modification. Third, child care teachers need additional professional development resources. Finally, the findings of this study point to the importance of the role of center context in the professional development experiences of child care teachers.

**Child Care Teachers' Perspectives Add to Our Understandings of Their Professional Development Needs**

This study provided a look into the professional development experiences of child care teachers and allowed them the opportunity to articulate their training experiences and their understandings of those experiences. The findings clearly indicate that child care teachers can provide the field with valuable information and insight about their professional development. Throughout the interview sessions, the teachers shared their observations, reflections, thoughts, understandings, and knowledge about their own experiences as well as their perspectives on training in general and its role in the field.

While it seems reasonable to assume that many of these teachers would not have had many prior opportunities to talk about their training experiences, most of the teachers were very articulate and forthright during the interview sessions. For some of the teachers, it appeared that professional development was a topic of interest to them. Their responses indicated that they had given this topic a great deal of thought and were very clear in their opinions. Mary is an example. Her responses to questions about her training, while often echoing the opinions of others, were somewhat unique in their ability to convey her thoughts and ideas. Others began their interview sessions in a more reserved manner, but as the conversation continued and their comfort level rose, they

opened up and often appeared to be thinking out loud. For example, when discussing the relationship between training and teacher turnover, Randy initially responded that she did not "think that the trainings have anything to do with turnover" but then changed her mind. She continued, "I mean, it may play a small part. I take that back, I think that it may play a small part, but a bigger part is…" The interview sessions seemed to play a dual role in that they provided this study with a wealth of data concerning the teachers' experiences, but also allowed the teachers the opportunity to articulate their thoughts to someone who wanted hear them.

The findings also demonstrate that child care teachers can provide information about their own learning styles and preferences. The teachers were clear about their preferred formats for training and framed these discussions with their understanding about how particular formats were more or less helpful to their own learning. They are very specific about what works for them and what does not, as Kim was when she said that "a stand-up lecture doesn't work for me at all". Or when Olga explained that she did not like training from videos because "it's just hard for me to pick out the information".

This study provides evidence that child care teachers do think about their professional development and can articulate their ideas about the professional development needs of child care teachers including their own training needs, their insight into understanding the needs of others, and their viewpoints about the role of training in the field.

**State Regulations for Child Care Teacher Training Need Modification**

Simply reviewing the training requirements listed in the state standards for child care teachers in Texas would lead most to believe that they are not adequate considering the high level of responsibility for children that these teachers hold. Granted, the purpose of licensing regulations is to establish the "minimum required of an acceptable child care program" (Gallagher, Rooney, & Campbell, 1999, p.313). However, based on the teachers' descriptions of their experiences with training at their various centers, it appears that the centers in which they are and have been employed are not rising beyond these minimum standards for training and, in some cases, are not meeting the standards.

The teachers in this study generally agreed that more training is needed and that the minimal requirements listed in the standards are not enough. Considering that the majority of these teachers arrived in the field without prior training or experience, it is not surprising that they felt they had been "thrown in the classroom". Both the teachers' descriptions of their experiences with training in the field and their stated viewpoints lead to the conclusion that child care teachers simply do not receive adequate preservice training experiences. Due to these minimal (or nonexistent) entry training experiences, the teachers described their experiences as "sink or swim" and their descriptions of their struggles highlight the need for additional preservice and entry training opportunities. The teachers also thought that child care teachers do not receive adequate inservice training experiences. Even teachers with more experience in the field, and therefore higher levels of training, consistently expressed this viewpoint. Additionally, as described in Chapter Four, several teachers pointed out that because the regulations require teachers to participate in 15 clock hours of training annually, and this is

determined by their date of hire (Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, 2006), teachers could conceivably go long periods of time without participating in any training and then catch up before the end of their year.

**Child Care Teachers Need Additional Professional Development Resources**

The findings of this study also suggest that the mode of delivery for child care teacher training is also problematic and that teachers need additional professional development resources. Both "in-house" and "outside" training classes, as described by these teachers, are limiting in terms of the opportunities available to the teachers, and this is compounded by reports from teachers that they typically searched for free training. When particular training needs are identified, the likelihood of finding training on a particular topic is not great. Based on the limited number of training topics mentioned in the teachers' descriptions of their training experiences and on the teachers' stated viewpoints about the lack of availability of specific training topics, particularly age-related topics, suggest that teachers need additional resources for training.

**Context Plays an Important Role in the Professional Development Experiences of Child Care Teachers**

The findings in this study consistently showed that context played a significant role in the professional development experiences of these teachers in a variety of ways. Teachers reported learning from others teachers within their contexts, they reported learning from the children in their classroom contexts, and they reported challenges they associated with characteristics of their center contexts in understanding material presented in training classes that did not consider their specific contexts.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

This study provided a look into the experiences of these teachers and allowed them the opportunity to articulate their experiences and their understandings of those experiences. The lack of research on the experiences and perceptions of child care teachers has been a significant gap in the early childhood literature. This study has sought to address this gap and provide the field with insight from the teachers' perspectives. It has also sought to add to our understanding of teachers working in for-profit centers. The issue of professional development for child care teachers is complex and multi-faceted. Insight that can be gained from teachers working in variety of programs adds to our understandings and provides information that can assist the field in better meeting the needs of all teachers. Their perspectives need to be added to the dialogue.

# Appendix A: Introductory Letters for Child Care Centers

Dear Child Care Center Teacher,

My name is Shelley Nicholson and I am a doctoral student in Early Childhood Education at the University of Texas working on my dissertation study. My study involves interviewing child care teachers about their perceptions of their training experiences. I am looking for participants who have been working in child care at least six months. Would you be interested?

If you decide to participate, I will interview you twice at your convenience and outside of your working hours. Each interview session will last between 30 minutes and one hour. In these interview sessions we will explore your past training history, connections that you see between training and working in the classroom, your ideas about training, and how you think training is associated to issues in the field such as quality. I will audiotape the interview sessions so that I can type them up later. I will give you a fake name and erase the tapes as soon as I am finished with them to protect your privacy.

At the end of the first interview session, you will receive a gift card worth $10 to Wal-Mart in appreciation for your time and involvement. Further, if three teachers at your center decide to participate, I will conduct a free two-hour training seminar on the topic of your director's choice for your entire center.

I have worked in the child care field for over 20 years (as a teacher, a director and as a trainer), have a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education and have been an Accreditation Validator for NAEYC. I am deeply committed to the early childhood profession in general and child care in particular. The research that has been conducted on child care teachers has not asked the teachers about their experiences or what they think. I think that this is a hole in our knowledge that needs to be filled. My hope is that findings from this study may help those who work at meeting the training needs of child care teachers.

Thanks for your time and consideration. If you would like to participate or for more information, please call me at 123-1234 (home) or 234-5647 (cell).

Sincerely,
Shelley Nicholson

Dear Child Care Center Director,

My name is Shelley Nicholson and I am a doctoral student in Early Childhood Education at the University of Texas working on my dissertation study. My study involves interviewing child care teachers about their perceptions of their training experiences. I am looking for participants who have been working in child care at least six months. Do you have any teachers that you think would be willing to participate?

If they decide to participate, I will interview the teacher(s) twice. Each session will last between 30 minutes and one hour. This will be done outside of their working hours at their convenience and at no inconvenience to your center. In the interview sessions we will explore their past training history, connections that they see between training and working in the classroom, their ideas about training, and how they think training is associated to issues in the field such as quality.

At the end of their first interview session, each teacher that participates will receive a gift card worth $10 to Wal-Mart in appreciation for their time and involvement. Further, if three teachers at your center decide to participate, I will conduct a free two-hour training seminar on the topic of your choice for your entire center.

I have worked in the child care field for over 20 years (as a teacher, a director and as a trainer), have a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Texas and have been an Accreditation Validator for NAEYC. I am deeply committed to the early childhood profession in general and child care in particular. The research that has been conducted on child care and child care teachers has not asked the teachers about their experiences or what they think. I think that this is a hole in our knowledge that needs to be filled. My hope is that findings from this study may help those who work at meeting the training needs of child care teachers.

Thanks for your time and consideration. If you have teachers that you think would be willing to participate, please give them a copy of the attached flyer. My phone number is listed on the flyer and they can call me directly to find out about becoming a participant. If you have any questions, please feel free to call as well. My number is 123-4567 (home) or 234-5678 (cell).

Sincerely,
Shelley Nicholson

# Appendix B: Interview Questions

***Background Information***
Name?
Age?
Ethnicity?
Marital status?
Children? Ages? In child care?
Employer?
How long have you worked for your current employer?
How long have you worked in child care in general?
What age group do you currently work with?
What age groups have you worked with in the past?
Have you ever held an administrative position?
Educational Background
High school diploma or GED?
CDA?
College coursework? Degrees? Field?
Formal educational experiences before, during work in child care?

***Training History***
Training prior to first job in child care?
Did you feel prepared to work in child care?
Initial training in child care?
Initial training helpful? What worked, what didn't?
Training since beginning in child care?
Fifteen clock hours of training each year?
Outside training or in-house?
Training held during work hours or after hours?
Was training paid or not paid?
CPR/First Aid Training?
Food Handler Training?
General amount of training?
Training topics?
Helpfulness of training topics?
Repeated training topics?
Training beneficial?
Training not helpful?
Incorrect or impractical information in training?
General thoughts about quality of training experiences?
Format of trainings? Lecture? Activities? Self-study? Videos?
Where did you learn things not taught in training?
Who were your best teachers? Trainers/mentors/directors/peers?
What sources of information are helpful to you? Classes/books/mentors/peers?
Have you had any difficulties in getting training? Child care issues, transportation, etc.?

***Perceptions about the Relationship of Training to Classroom Practice***

How do you think your training experiences have influenced what you do you in your classroom?

Can you think of specific instances of things you learned working well for you in your classroom?

Can you think of instances where something taught in training was not helpful?

What type of training do you think is most helpful in assisting teachers become better teachers?

***Perceptions about the Relationship of Training to Issues in the Field***

Do you think there is a relationship between training and quality child care? Explain.

Do you think there is a relationship between training and teacher turnover? Explain.

***Ideas about Training***

What are your ideas about training?

How important do you think training is?

What kind of training do you think child care teachers need before beginning work as a teacher?

What kind of training do you think new teachers need?

What kind of on-going training do you think teachers need?

If you could devise a training program, what would it look like?

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# Vita

Shelley Ann Nicholson was born in Dallas, Texas on September 11, 1967, the daughter of Linda Carol Atkinson and Dale Arthur Allen. After completing her work at Leander High School, Leander, Texas, in 1985, she entered Austin Community College in Austin, Texas After receiving the degree of Associate of Arts from Austin Community College in May, 1989, she enter the University of Texas in Austin, Texas She received the degree of Bachelor of Science from the University of Texas in May, 1992. During the following years, she was employed as a child care center director. In June, 2000, she entered The Graduate School at the University of Texas. She received the degree of Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education from the University of Texas in December, 2001. In January of 2002, Shelley entered the doctoral program in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas. While completing her doctoral degree, Shelley worked with undergraduate students in the capacity of a Teaching Assistant and Assistant Instructor, and also worked for Stepping Stone Schools in Austin, Texas as a child care teacher educator.

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